WHAT IS THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND?
These folks know (and they're not telling!)

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FROM THE MAKERS OF *AMIGA FORMAT*, A MAGAZINE WITH *ATTITUDE*

NEW!

AMIGA POWER

INSIDE! 8 PAGES PACKED TO OVERFLOWING WITH GREAT TIPS! The action starts on p49!

CREATION, 'BOB' AND POPULOUS II

Peter Molyneux reveals the big non-secret behind great games

PLUS! Does Eric Bitmap *really* like his games? He tells all on page 72...

WIN A JOB AT BULLFROG!
QUICK! FLICK TO PAGE 93!

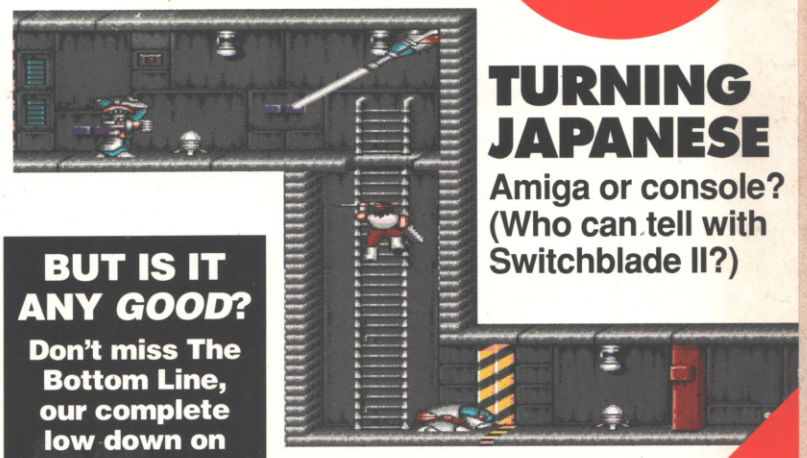
KID GLOVES
THE COMPLETE GAME

HURRY! TURN TO PAGE 5 FOR FULL DETAILS! →

KID GLOVES MILLENNIUM

FIVE WORLDS OF PLATFORM ACTION
A COMPLETE GAME hand-picked from the *AMIGA POWER* All-Time Top 100 Games.
NEVER RELEASED ON BUDGET!
If you can't see your copy of Kid Gloves stuck here ask your newsagent now!

ALL-TIME TOP GAMES



TURNING JAPANESE
Amiga or console? (Who can tell with Switchblade II?)

BUT IS IT ANY *GOOD*?
Don't miss The Bottom Line, our complete low down on
EVERY AMIGA GAME released last year!

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ISSUE 2

PC SIMS...A SUPE

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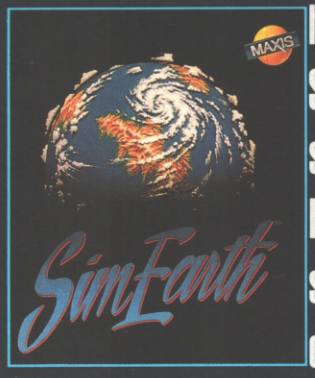
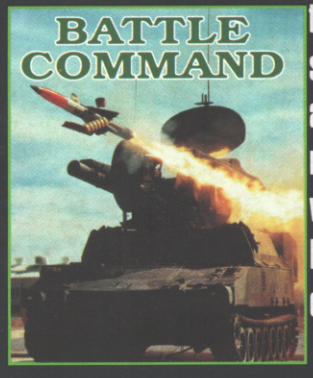
Take charge of an entire planet from its birth until its death-10 billions years later. Guide life from its inception as single-celled microbes to a civilization that can reach for the stars. THE LIVING PLANET Inspired by James Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis, SimEarth simulates the Earth as a single living organism.



THE THINK TANK

Set in the near future, as an alternative reality, Battle Command is an arcade/strategy game in which the player controls a single "Mauler" Assault Tank in one of 16 scenarios (missions) in the ultra war, fought between two dominant races in the new World. Such are the defensive capabilities of each side, full scale attacks are suicidal, so any offensive moves are, by necessity, small "behind the lines" actions performed by elite troops in specially designed vehicles. The Mauler is the latest such machine - capable of being lifted in and out of hostile territory by fast stealth choppers and armed with the most advanced weaponry the Northern scientists can devise.



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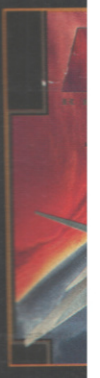

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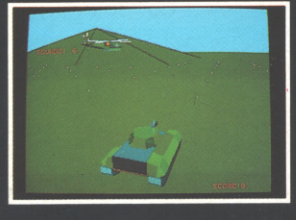

PERIOR SPECIES

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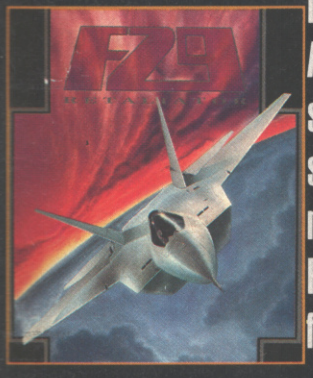
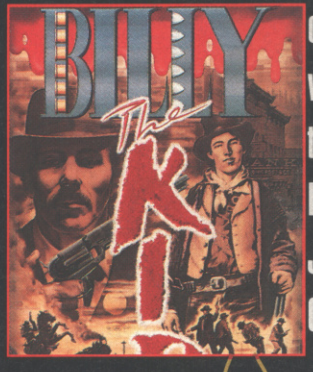
THE RIGHT STUFF

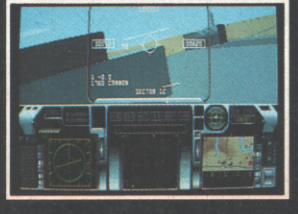
F 29 Retaliator presents the fastest and most detailed graphical enviroment ever seen in a flight simulator. This is the only flight simulation to provide 100 complex missions over four intense battle senarios. The only flight simulation to provide detailed daily war update reports. The only flight simulation to present the latest in aerodynamic technology introducing ECOP cockpits, backwinder AAMS, supercruise, stealth and more! F29 Retaliator is that flight simulation.



GUN LAW

"BILLY THE KID" is a one or two player action/strategy game set in the Wild West, which allows the player to assume the identity of either a gun totting desperado with a heart of gold , Billy himself or his ex-best friend, sharp shooting, law abiding pillar of the community, Sheriff Pat Garrett. They are in love with the same woman and ultimately, in a nail biting climatic finale, are going to end up pointing guns at each other. Only one character can walk away from this showdown BUT THAT'S JUST THE WAY OF THE WEST





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AMIGA POWER
ISSUE TWO JUNE 1991

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A big Amiga Power snog goes out to Kate Hodges and (especially) Tamara Ward for helping out with 'you know what'. We'll love you forever.

COMPETITION WINNER: We got quite a response to last month's 'make something neat out of folded paper competition' – thanks guys – with some quite bizarre entries. Birds which if you 'pull tab a' or 'squeeze where I've put the crosses' managed an approximation of pecking or flapping their wings seemed quite popular, as did, erm, 'handy paper boxes' and some things we couldn't quite work out. By common consent however, the best was the quite spectacular dragon submitted by Michael Hart of March in Cambridgeshire. Well done Michael – expect your free game through the post soon!
THIS MONTH'S COMPO: Send us a picture of someone that you really fancy – it can be a boy or a girl, we don't care (we'll give the pictures of blokes to Alison or Deborah or someone) – and our favourite will win a copy of one of the best games reviewed this issue. (If we really like two or three of them, we'll get a bit more generous with the software). It can be somebody famous cut out of a magazine, or a picture of someone you met on holiday, or the person who works down the chip shop or anyone really. Get snapping/busy with the scissors now!

Amiga Power comes to you from the lovely sunny people at Future Publishing, Britain's biggest (and best!) publisher of 'leisure' computing magazines. Not only do we 'do' Amiga Format, Amiga Shopper, ST Format, Your Sinclair, Commodore Format, Amstrad Action, New Computer Express, Sega Power, PC Plus, PC Answers (due any day now), 8000 Plus, MacPublishing (which you can't buy in the shops), Classic CD and Needlecraft (these last two aren't actually computer mags, but who's splitting hairs?) – we're cuddly too!

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10 TRUE STORIES
All the news that's fit to print – from *Ramparts* to *Rodland*, from *Beast Busters* to *Bonanza Bros*, you'll find the true story in True Stories. Plus Crib Sheets, Oh dear..., and all your other regular 'favourites'...

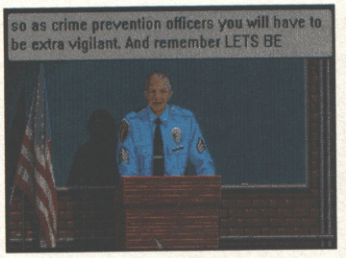
16 THE CHARTS
What's going up, what's coming down and what's hovering about in the middle somewhere – the 100 hottest games of the day, as voted for by *you*, the consumers, with your wallets.

49 COMPLETE CONTROL
The most reliable hints and tips in the business, here to give *you* Complete Control over *your* games. This month, level codes to *Gem'X* and *Brat*, cheats for a whole bundle of older things and – yes! – the second (and concluding) massive six-page (six page!) final instalment of Gary's Complete Guide to *Rainbow Islands*. If there's ever been a more comprehensive guide to any game printed anywhere, we'd like to see it!

GAMES OF THE MONTH

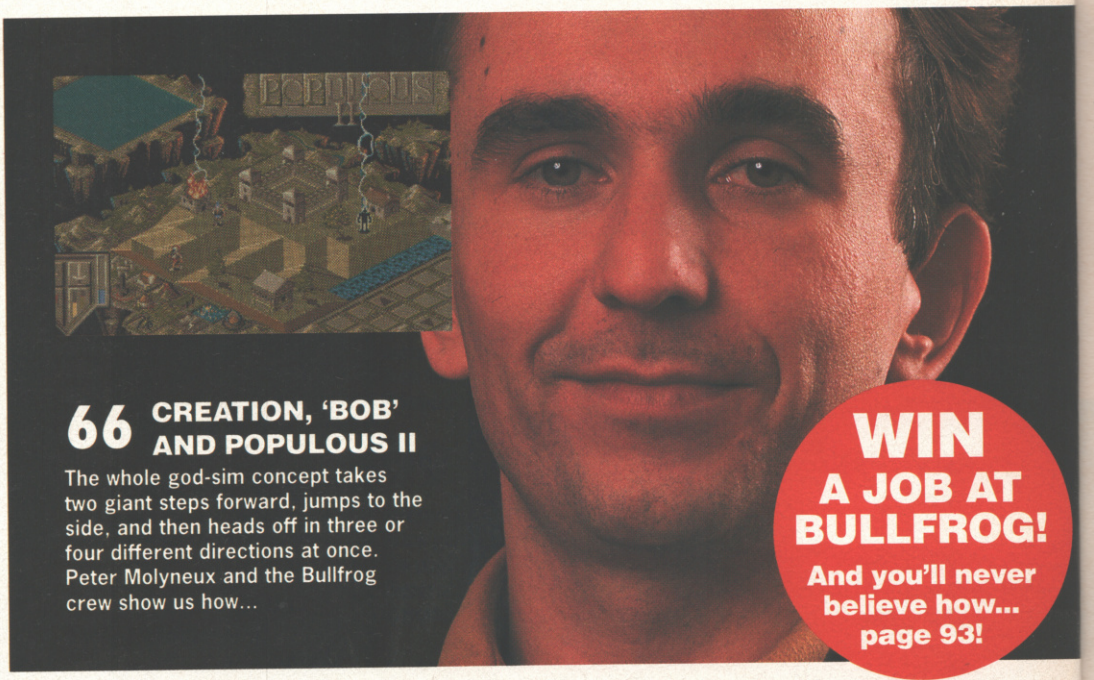
THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND
Quite simply, the best adventure game we've ever seen. Page 22

LORDS OF CHAOS
Not quite the *Laser Squad* seque we expected, but...Page 26



HILL STREET BLUES
Would you believe, a policeman's *Sim City..?* Page 36

3D CONSTRUCTION KIT
Erm, well, no – it's not *actually* a game as such... Page 22



66 CREATION, 'BOB' AND POPULOUS II
The whole god-sim concept takes two giant steps forward, jumps to the side, and then heads off in three or four different directions at once. Peter Molyneux and the Bullfrog crew show us how...

WIN A JOB AT BULLFROG!
And you'll never believe how... page 93!

95 SUBSCRIPTION OFFER
With free games like *Speedball 2*, *Gods* and – yes! – the incredible *Lemmings* up for grabs, (not to mention a fair slice of money off!) we quite simply make you an offer you can't refuse! Have *you* subscribed yet?

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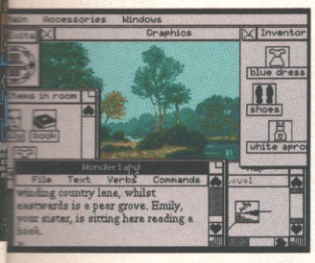
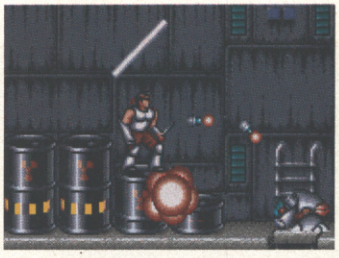
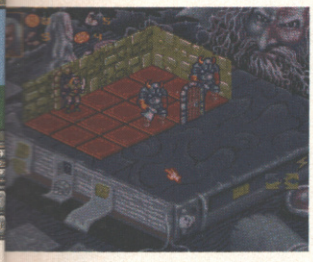
GAMES RATED IN EVERY ISSUE!



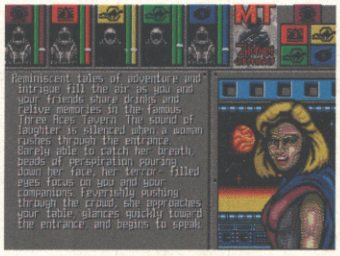
WONDERLAND
Long awaited certainly, but worth it? Well... Page 28



SWITCHBLADE II
Arcade-quality gameplay, and graphics that fit. Page 32



HERO QUEST
Board game in 3D isometric romp shock! Page 42



MEGATRAVELLER 1
Introducing: the world's *second* favourite role player... Page 44

62 IT'S A SNIP!
Every month more and more excellent older games get re-released in the £7.99-£10.99 price bracket – and few better than the 20 we recommend here. (Now there's *no* decent excuse for not owning them...)

72 IF I'D KNOWN THEN...
Eric Matthews recovers from the (really quite mild) critical nitpicking *Gods* received last issue, dusts himself down, then tells us when *he* really thinks of the Bitmaps' old games...

99 THE BOTTOM LINE
Amiga Power's unique reference guide to every significant full price game released over the past year. Six pages packed to overflowing with Uppers, Downers and – yes! – the all important Bottom Line...

106 DO THE WRITE THING
Letters of praise, more letters of praise and – inevitable really – a few whinges from publishers still smarting from last month's critical drubbings. Reaction to the first issue was, erm, 'varied' to say the least...

ALSO REVIEWED

Alpha Waves ----------79
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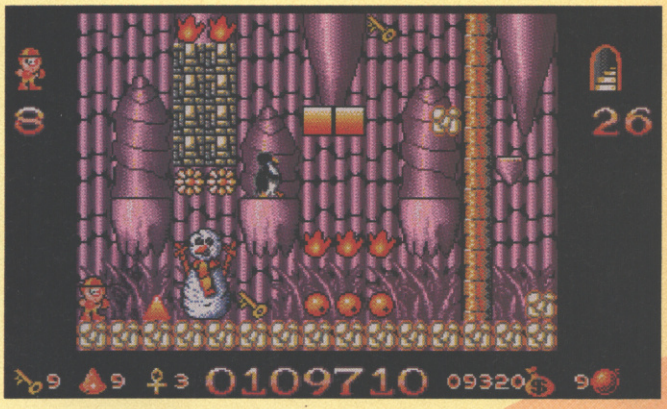
Normally this space would be packed full to bursting with background info and Players' Guides to whatever demos we happen to have on the disk. Not so this month though...

disk TWO



AND THIS IS

KID GLOVES

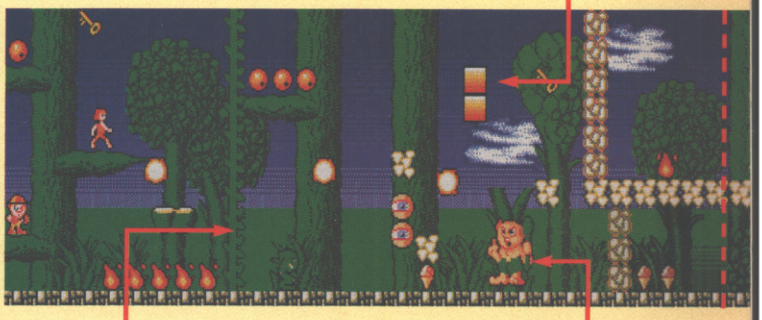
Welcome to AMIGA POWER issue 2, and welcome to *Kid Gloves* – our second complete All-Time Top 100 giveaway game. As before, what follows are three and a half pages containing just about anything you could conceivably wish to know about the game (and quite probably quite a few things you don't care two hoots about) – it's nothing if not comprehensive. Your guide, Mr Gary Penn...

ALL-TIME top GAMES

IF YOU GO DOWN TO THE WOODS

You certainly are sure of a big surprise. Here's the full run-down on the inhabitants of the first time zone. They're representative of the types of adversary you're likely to meet on later levels, though they won't look quite the same. Some of them appear in other time zones too.

SENSITIVE BLOCKS: Are these touchy or what? When Kid touches one of these blocks it falls. It can then be used as a platform to reach higher blocks. Be careful not to let any of them fall on Kid's head!

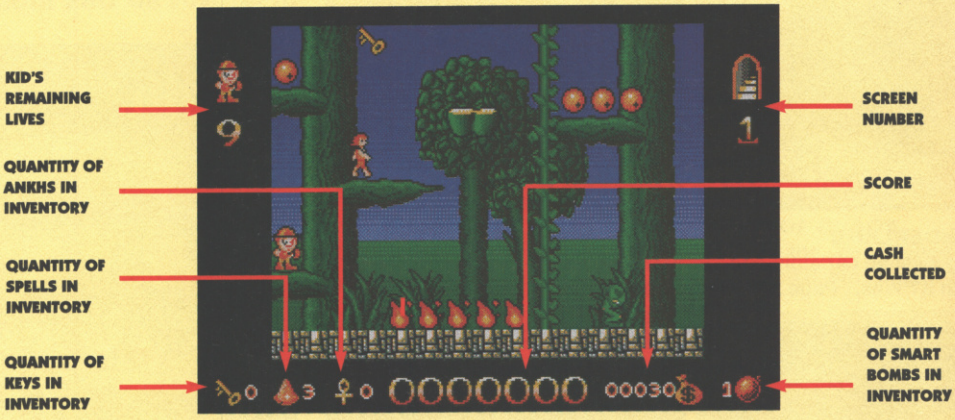


'LOCKED' BARRIERS: Some seemingly solid obstacles are in fact easily removed by means of a key. The barrier will simply disappear along with the key itself when Kid makes contact. Some screens feature more than one 'locked' barrier, but not necessarily all of them need to be removed, so use your keys wisely.

OGRE
Value: 1000 Points Per Hit
Hit points: 5
He doesn't shoot or anything like that but he does bounce up and down a lot.

A FARAWAY FOREST, LONG, LONG AGO

(Note that there is effectively no limit to the quantity of items which can be collected but that the counter will show no more than nine of anything).



It was a dreary Sunday afternoon in January. Kid was bored. Very bored. He'd had to endure his great, great uncle Indiana Stallone droning on about the good old days, though thankfully the old buzzard had managed to bore himself to sleep before Kid nodded off. Ho hum. It was time to explore...

Ten minutes of fruitless searching later, and Kid was no less bored than before. Then he had an idea. Maybe the study would hold more interest...

It didn't. The shelves were lined with dreary (not to mention dusty) looking books with silly foreign writing on them while an assortment of obviously uninteresting junk lined the floor. What a drag. Kid kicked his heels as he made for the door. He was about to leave the room when something caught his eye. He pushed aside the Zimmer frame and clambered over the bathchair (which had both seen better days, it must be said) to find...a tatty old pair of boxing gloves.

Now these could be fun. He slipped them on. Not a good fit – he'd have to grow into them.

The cracked mirror beckoned. But before Kid had time to strike a pose something strange happened – the gloves suddenly seemed to fit perfectly. Stranger still, they began to glow. The room began to spin. Kid felt sick. This wasn't fun at all. And then...

Darkness.

When Kid awoke he couldn't believe his eyes. He couldn't rub them either for the boxing gloves were still stuck tight. Kid appeared to be sitting in the middle of a vast prehistoric jungle. A land that time had long forgotten. (That, or a large, award-winning back garden).
Kid's powerful imagination quickly came into play, allowing him to realise the nature of his predicament. Wearing the gloves had activated their magical properties and transported him back in time. So how would he get back to the future?

The answer – to Kid as well as to most game players – was obvious. By battling his way to the end of this particular time zone and relying on the gloves to do their stuff again, that's how (though you have to bear in mind that time travel is anything but reliable). Ooh yes, I think I can feel an adventure coming on...

KID'S SPECIAL OBJECTS

There are many different types to be found lying around from screen to screen. Other than various other forms of fruit on the later levels, the following items are pretty much all you can expect to find in Kid Gloves...

ICE CREAM
Value: 150 Points
And it tastes as good as it looks.

ORANGE
Value: 150 Points
Full of fruity goodness.

DOLLAR
Value: No Points
But it does add $10 to Kid's account.

MONEY BAG
Value: No Points
But it too adds $10 to Kid's account.

KEYS
Value: No Points
But they do open locked barriers.

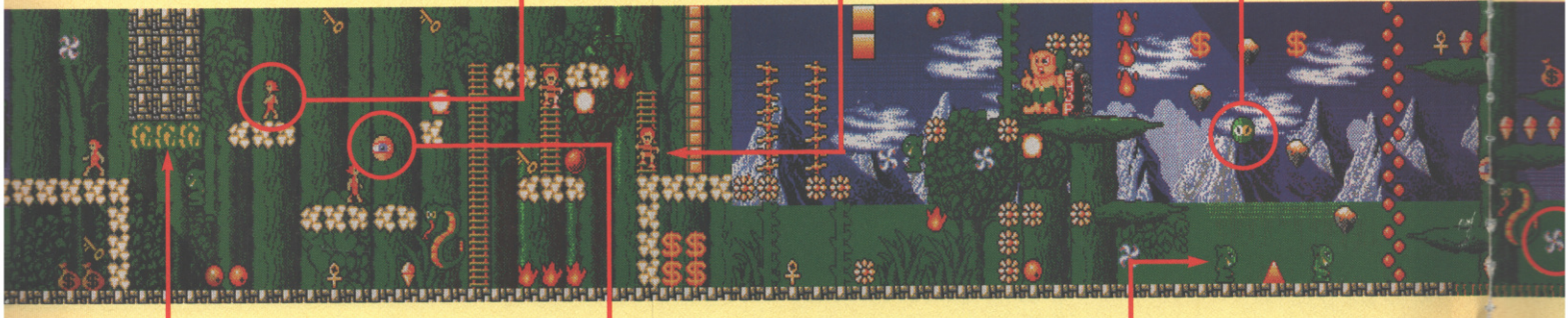
ANKH
Value: No Points
Collect four of these for an extra life.

BOMB
Value: No Points
But it is a useful weapon to have.

ANGRY WOMAN
Value: 100 Points Per Hit (Plus 100 Points Bonus On Demise)
Hit points: 1-2
Boy, is she mad. She stomps back and forth, turning whenever she reaches the edge of a platform or the screen. (Just be thankful she doesn't shoot!)

LADDERLADY
Value: 120 Points Per Hit (Plus 120 Points Bonus On Demise)
Hit points: 2-3
She's as mad as a village, this one. She climbs up and down ladders, stopping only to clap her hands when she reaches the top or bottom.

BUGEYES
Value: None
Hit points: Indestructible
It tends to spin around in a circle when it eventually appears.



DISAPPEARING BLOCKS: Touch one and it disappears. Anything above it succumbs to the force of gravity and falls. Just you make sure that nothing falls down onto Kid's head. Actually, there is another type to watch out for, and that's the type that simply vanishes after about 10-15 seconds.

EYEBALL
Value: 250 Points Per Hit (Plus 250 Points Bonus On Demise)
Hit points: 1-3
Appears on certain screens if Kid hangs around for too long. It moves towards Kid, re-assessing his position every second.

GREEN GOBLIN
Value: 150 Points Per Hit (Plus 150 Points Bonus On Demise)
Hit points: 1-2
They come in two varieties. The first simply hops back and forth. The other type bounces up and down on the spot or back and forth.

THE SMARTER WAY TO SHOP

Here's the reason why you collected all that cash – so you could go shopping. If you feel the need to improve your inventory or weaponry and happen to stumble across a doorway marked SHOP, simply walk into it. Then, as if by magic, the shopkeeper will appear ...

'CAN I HELP YOU?' enquires the voluptuous shopkeeper once she has risen from behind the counter. Hubba hubba! You betcha, baby! Welcome to Madame. Use the joystick to move the arrow to point to the item of your choice. The description and cost of the item in question is given in the panel at the bottom of the screen. If this is to your liking and you wish to buy the piece, press the firebutton. Assuming Kid's bank balance is sufficiently healthy, the cash will be deducted from his account and the newly purchased item added to his inventory. Note that you can only own one particular weapon at a time, so don't try buying two of the same. If nothing else takes your fancy or Kid's cash has run out, move the arrow so that it points to the EXIT sign. Now press the firebutton to leave the shop and return to the fray. Note that when you reappear on screen, be careful not to move kid over to the shop again unless you wish to go back into it for some more goodies.

As ever, there's one law for the rich and another for tinkers. Only three items can be acquired for no charge as they can occasionally be found lying around on some screens. Actually, there are four – the Deathcoin can only be acquired from the shop but it doesn't cost a cent.

1. MAGIC
Cost: $30
There's no way of telling which one of the six different spells (see NOW THAT'S MAGIC) is being bought. But what the heck – it's better than a slap in the belly with a wet fish.

2. VITALITY
Cost: $40
You can buy a new life for $160 as four of these is all you need. But only if you get desperate – sufficient quantities are usually left lying around anyway.

3. KEY
Cost: $50
If you can't collect them, buy them.

4. BOMB
Cost: $60
There aren't many to be found lying around, so here's the best place to acquire them. Activating a Smart Bomb kills any destructible creatures on screen.

5. DEATHCOIN
Cost: FREE!

6. FLAMES
Cost: $60

7. DEATHSTAR
Cost: $140

8. MEGALASER
Cost: $350

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT, ALFIE?

In *Kid Gloves* there are five time zones to negotiate before Kid is returned to his great-great uncle's home. Each time zone features 10 screens comprising an arrangement of platforms which are occasionally punctuated by ladders and obstacles to overcome. Timely leaping, accurate shooting and a little lateral thinking are the order of the day here.

HERE WE GO, HERE WE GO, HERE WE GO...

Right then. Let's get down to it and let's do it. Firstly, plug a joystick into Port Two (that's not the one into which you'd usually plug a mouse). Now you can watch the attract sequence or press the joystick fire button at any point to begin play.

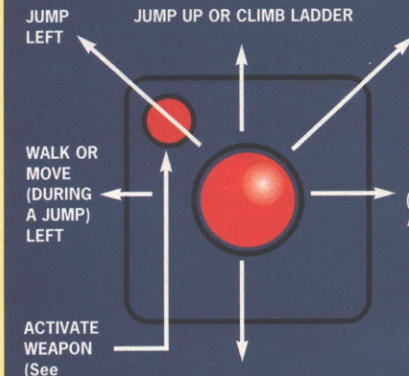
disk TWO

MEET THE KID

He's a swooner-dreamboat of a character and no mistake. Franky and Bing just aren't in it. But looks and charisma aside, Kid's an agile little bleeder. He walks. He talks. He shoots. And he jumps better than your average 'roo. Ooh yes. He can even be moved through the air during a jump, regardless of his direction of launch (unless, of course, there's something in the way). Kid's quest begins with nine lives. A life is lost whenever Kid makes contact with something bad. When all his lives are lost it's Game Over. →

KEEPING KID UNDER CONTROL

Kid's action are controlled primarily via a joystick, with some special functions activated from the keyboard.



SPACE BAR
Activate Smart Bomb (See IT'S THE SMARTER WAY TO SHOP)

RETURN
Activate Spell (See NOW THAT'S MAGIC)

F1
Pause & Unpause

←
Go Back In Time (See THANKS, UNCLE ALBERT!)

BLINKY
Value: 250 Points Per Hit (Plus 250 Points Bonus On Demise)
Hit points: 3
It looks pretty similar to Bugeyes, only this one can be killed. It usually moves in a zig-zag type pattern.

DISAPPEARING BARRIERS: These simply disappear when Kid has been on a single screen for around 10-15 seconds. This is all well and good, but Kid has to contend with any adversaries in the meantime. A second type of disappearing barrier only does so when shot, but – like its cousin – it isn't encountered until the second time zone.

MOVING PLATFORMS
They move, which is obvious enough. But what you may not have guessed is that they move up and down – even if Kid's on one. Bear in mind that should a moving platform reach the top of a screen, Kid is knocked off.

HOTBALL
Value: 250 Points Per Hit (Plus 500 Points Bonus On Demise)
Hit points: 1-2
Appears on certain screens if Kid hangs around for too long. It moves in a predictable pattern, usually in a zig-zag.

SPINNER
Value: None
Hit points: Indestructible
It more often than not moves up and down the screen in a predictable pattern.

FIRE
Value: None
Hit points: Indestructible
Not to be confused with the static flame for this one generally moves up and down the screen in a predictable pattern.

LADDERS: Ladders come in various shapes and sizes, sometimes even looking like a pile of fruit. To climb one, Kid must stand directly in line with it, then push the joystick up. Ladders can also be grabbed onto mid-jump, by pushing the joystick up.

SNAKE
Value: 1000 Points
Hit points: 5
Just like the Ogre, the Snake does little more than bounce up and down.

disk TWO

KID'S WEAPONS

Kid's gloves are magical when it comes to time travel, but tragically that's about all they are good for. When it comes to removing anything animate that gets in the way Kid needs a helping hand. Something like one of these four weapons, all of which are available from your local *Kid Gloves* store.

DEATHCOIN

Kid begins his quest with this weapon. A Deathcoin bounces around a bit, changing direction when it hits an obstacle or the edge of a screen. When a Deathcoin hits a creature it knocks off a single Hit Point. Up to two Deathcoins can be on screen at once. Note that they don't hang around for too long before disappearing.

FLAMES

The marketing people behind this one deserve some credit. They gave it the plural tag to conjure up images of some marvellous multiple shot weapon, when the term in fact refers to the unlimited supply of single-shot flames. Still, it's better than the Deathcoin as this hot baby removes two Hit Points.

DEATHSTAR

These behave pretty much like the Deathcoins, only they are considerably better at removing Hit Points.

MEGALASER

A beam of death which shoots across the screen – unless it's blocked by an obstacle or hardy adversary. On the whole, most creatures are killed with a single shot.

THE SCREEN SCENE

Each screen is effectively divided into a foreground, a middleground and a background. Kid can quite easily walk past background objects but not always those in the middleground and foreground. Most obstacles can be negotiated by simply walking or jumping over them. Others must be dealt with in special ways (see KNOW YOUR BLOCKS AND PLATFORMS).

When Kid first enters a screen, everything about his inventory is remembered – that's the quantity of keys, spells, cash and bombs in his possession. What this means is that if Kid has any lives remaining when he meets his demise, he is returned to the point of entry with his status as it was when he first entered the screen. The prior state of the blocks and platforms is also resumed.

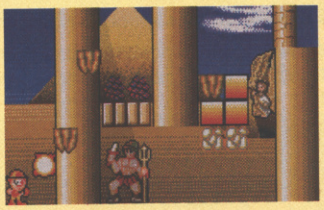
Kid can more often than not move freely between screens – in fact he sometimes has little choice but to do so. That's unless an immovable obstacle blocks his way or it's the first or last screen of a time zone. The only other means of moving between screens is by going back in time (see THANKS, UNCLE ALBERT!). Otherwise, pretty much anything removed on a screen (such as adversaries, barriers and blocks) stays out of play should Kid see fit to return to it.

KID'S CONTENDERS

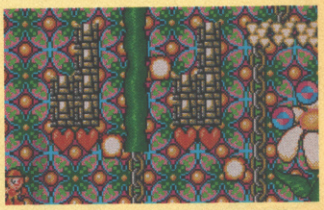
Being the cute, large-eyed, round-faced kid that he is makes our Kid most desirable. Everybody wants him, though not necessarily for a kiss and a cuddle. You see, strange creatures inhabit each time zone. There are basically two distinctly different types – those which move in simplistic, predictable patterns, and those which bounce (some of which are larger than the more mundane beings). Most of the adversaries can be destroyed with Kid's weapon (see WEAPONRY), a bomb (see IT'S THE SMARTER WAY TO SHOP) or a spell (see NOW THAT'S MAGIC!). Basically anything which flashes when it's hit by a weapon can be destroyed. Just remember that some creatures are hardier than others – that's why the Hit Points are given for the creatures encountered on the first level.

Also note that not all adversaries appear from the outset. Some wait for a while before making themselves known, so keep 'em peeled.

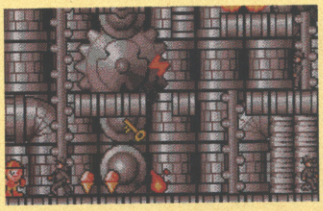
SOME OF THE OTHER LEVELS



THE BORDERS OF ANCIENT EGYPT



THE WEST COAST 1967 – PSYCHEDELIA!



LONDON 1876 – INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

A LONELY PLACE IN THE ICE AGE

THANKS, UNCLE ALBERT!

'Eeeeh, it takes me back,' Kid's Uncle Albert used to say. And it still does. When all seems lost and Kid can progress no further, there are only really two options: death or glory. The latter choice involves a quick journey back in time through three screens. Everything on the three screens passed with be returned to its original state – that's every door, key, bonus object, adversary and so on.

NOW THAT'S MAGIC!

You may like this or you may not but you can never actually tell which one of the six available spells is going to be activated. The name of spell which has been cast is shown on screen before the action freezes and anything which is going to be affected by the power of the magic flashes. If nothing on screen flashes, then it's not going to be affected by the spell. What a sad waste of mystical resources.

SESAME: Turns any locked doors or like obstacles into oranges which can be collected for bonus points. It certainly comes in useful when you don't have a key to hand.

SAFETY: Remember kids – safety first. Anything on the floor that's full of harm will become harmless to the touch. Like the flames for example.

TIMBER: Most moving obstacles will fall to the floor, either clearing the way or blocking it. That makes this spell the nearest to a wooden spoon available.

YUM YUM: So-called because it turns anything that flashes into an orange.

SLOW MOTION: Any moving objects which flashed when this spell was cast will move in slow motion for a few seconds. Note that you cannot cast another spell whilst this one is active – even if it doesn't affect anything.

FREEZE: Guess what? Any moving object which flashed when this spell was cast will freeze for a few seconds. And once again, no other spell can be cast whilst this one is active – even if it doesn't affect anything.

BOXING CLEVER

Kid Gloves, originally released by Millennium, is the brainchild of one Timothy Closs, still a whipper-snapper at 20 and currently studying for his degree (Maths, if we remember correctly) at Cambridge. Before *Kid Gloves*, Timothy was responsible for a few well received 8-bit titles – *I Ball* and *I Ball II* for Firebird spring most readily to mind, but Bug Byte's *Bomber Bob* and US Gold's *Tremors* were his too. And that's where the story ends, just about. As we said, Timothy's currently a student, and it's unlikely that he will return to games programming. ■

LOADING YOUR COPY OF KID GLOVES

It couldn't be simpler. Ensure that no other program is running and that no-one's left a disk lying around inside the Amiga's internal drive. If all is clear, insert your *Kid Gloves* disk into the Amiga's internal disk drive. If your Amiga is turned off, turn it on. *Kid Gloves* should now load and run automatically. Please leave the *Kid Gloves* disk in the internal drive during play.

WHA' D' Y'MEAN KID GLOVES WOU'D NAE LOAD?

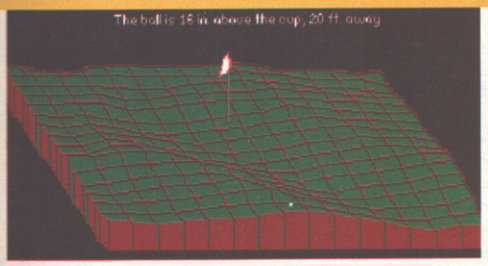
So your *Kid Gloves* disk is refusing to play ball, eh? Well, don't let it get you down. Let's see if we can help. Firstly, remove any peripherals from your Amiga and repeat the loading procedure (note that memory expansion devices should not affect the process so you can leave them be). No luck? You must have a faulty disk then. But don't despair. You could try using the Disk Doctor utility (found on the Workbench disk) on the faulty *Kid Gloves* disk. Details of how to use the Disk Doctor utility are found in the user's manual which comes with the Amiga. If the worse comes to the worst, don't worry. We will replace the corrupt *Kid Gloves* disk for you. Simply pop the naughty thang (minus the actual magazine) into a Jiffy bag or even a padded envelope and send it, along with your name and address of course (your equipment configuration would be helpful for our troubleshooting department), to...

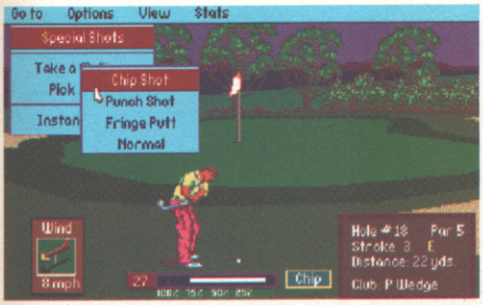
KID GLOVES RETURNS, Amiga Power, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon BA1 2BW

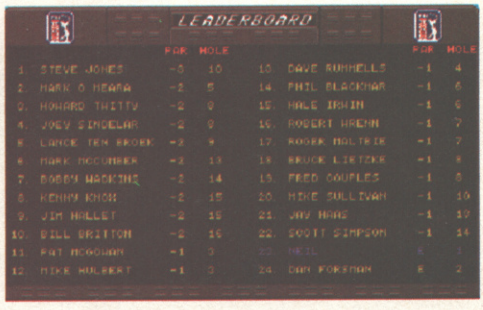
We will replace the disk within 28 days of receipt. (Please return the disk only).

AP

IF THE IDEA OF TAKING ON 60 TOP GOLF PROS SEEMS DAUNTING, THAT'S PAR FOR THESE COURSES







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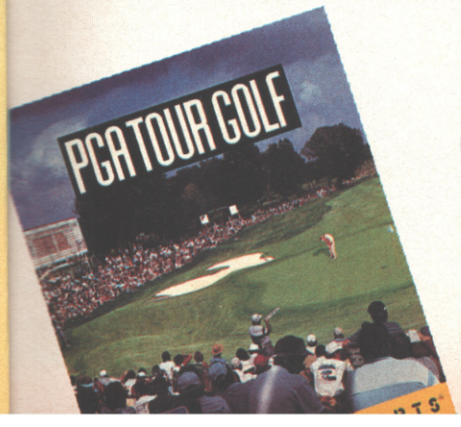
So if you thought golf was a game played by kindly uncles in snazzy sweaters, PGA TOUR Golf will help you think again.



IBM PC: £24.99 AMIGA: £24.99 SEGA MEGA DRIVE: £39.99

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NEWS

WATCH OUT MARIO BROS – HERE COMES SONIC

Sega reckons that its spiky new hero will knock Nintendo's Mario and Luigi off their mantle when it's launched on the Sega MegaDrive console this Summer. Initial reports are that the company has come alarmingly close, with *Sonic The Hedgehog* featuring a dreamy control system, plenty of character and a highly detailed and well-thought-out arcade adventure scenario. It's certainly been the most played game in our neighbouring Sega Power office this month. But what has this to do with the Amiga? Well, it could be everything, for rumour has it that US Gold has secured the licence to convert this potential blockbuster to the home computer formats. A team to do the job, and consequently a release, have yet to be determined.

A cult in the making, *Sonic* is set to take over the world.

CORPORATION II 'ON ICE'...
Bad news for anyone eagerly awaiting a sequel to Core Design's *Corporation* – it's 'on ice'. That's not to say that *Corporation II* won't happen, it's more a matter of when...

...AND SO IS 512K IMMORTAL
And more bad news, this time for owners of 512K machines who were expecting a compatible version of Electronic Arts' *The Immortal* – work on it has been scrapped. The only way you can play it now is on an Amiga with 1Mb or more. Will Harvey, the man behind *The Immortal*, is currently toying with ideas for a sequel, which is intended to continue where its predecessor left off.

Originally a smash on 8-bit, *Myth* has now been drastically up-rated for the Amiga market.

MYTHS AND NINJAS

You may remember System 3's *Myth* from the 8-bits – a spectacular platform arcade adventure taking you through various mythological time zones (an ancient Egyptian level, a Norse level and so on) and laced with a liberal sprinkling of *Last Ninja*-style puzzles. Well, now it's about to make it to the Amiga, though with a few subtle changes. 'Out', for a start, goes the Michael J. Fox-style central character, to be replaced by a squat barbarian. 'In' comes a Psygnosis-style intro sequence, and a fair degree of console-influence in the gameplay. Expect to see it released, alongside the long-awaited *Last Ninja 3*, within a couple of months.

ACTIVISION ARE BACK! (BACK! BACK! ETC)

Most of you will have heard something of strange goings on – indeed, a veritable collapse – at Activision earlier this year. Getting into the ins and outs of it all would be terribly tedious, but basically Activision UK is no longer a going concern, and their 'doings' are now in the hands of The Disk Company Europe, the Paris based wing of the American Disk Company which now owns a sizeable portion of Activision's parent Mediagenic. (Follow that?) What this means as far as we're concerned is that Activision's product line up will now come from Activision Europe (ie The Disk Company) and not from Activision UK – no real difference at all.

So what are the products? Well, some of them you'll have heard of before – indeed, some you may have even tried to buy, as many magazines reviewed them just before Activision went bust, expecting them to be on the shelves within a few days. Here's the full line up:

BEAST BUSTERS (July)

Operation Wolf games don't go away – they just get slicker and sicker. *Beast Busters* features the tried and tested *Wolf* gameplay, but couples it with a variety of over-the-top horror movie graphics – zombie limbs fly off in all directions, werewolves leap out of the screen at you and so on. Not, perhaps, the most remarkable of coin-ops, but, again, a faithful looking conversion.

Blood, exploding limbs and hordes of undead, in the *Beast Busters* conversion.

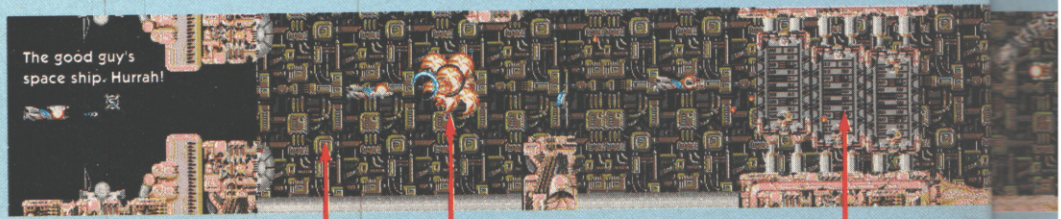
HUNTER (August)

This was one of the games everyone expected to be released at the start of the year. It's a solid 3D vector graphics explore/fight game, its main claim to fame being that instead of bombing around the place in tanks and planes, you play a solid 3D man who walks around and interacts with his environment. Very well received – though the game's depth was occasionally questioned – it looks set to be one of the late Summer's big hits.

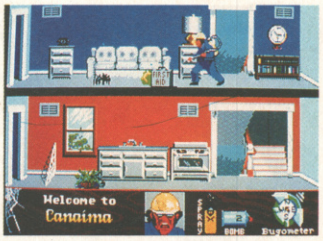
The thoroughly stunning *Hunter*, finally getting its release from Activision.

R-TYPE II (July)

This is, of course, a conversion of the coin-op sequel to *R-Type*, perhaps *the* arcade shoot-'em-up. While Activision's original *R-Type* conversions were variable, the Arc Developments-converted sequel promises much. The two level demo we played was certainly impressive, capturing the look and feel of the coin-op well – it's a much better game than the original Amiga *R-Type*. Five levels of blasting action, featuring new locations and baddies, but an almost-identical central ship and power-ups, await you in July.



IT'S NOT ABOUT SPIDERS!



Look, *whatever* you've heard, it's not about spiders, okay? (Ahem).

Look for a review of this next month, with luck – it's Disney Software's computer version of *Arachnophobia*. You may remember the film – a classy comedy thriller in the Jaws mould, which struggled mainly because the high spider content put viewers off. Titus, who develop computer variants for Disney in France, seem to have played fast and loose with the plot of the movie in developing the game. Their version centres on a special squad of spider killers, the owners of (and we quote) 'the only insecticide spray strong enough to kill the creatures without melting a path to the core of the earth.' Blimey! In fact, the whole thing comes across like a horizontally scrolling version of Audiogenic's *Exterminator*.

BONANZA BROS

US Gold has acquired the licence to convert Sega's *Bonanza Bros* to the home computer systems.

Yes, you may be asking, but who are the *Bonanza Bros*? Well, they're Mobo and Robo, a pair of small-time crooks made good. They'll steal anything that isn't bolted down – from banks, homes or even ocean liners. It all sounds quite unremarkable, but *Bonanza Bros* actually looks and plays quite differently to any of Sega's (or, indeed, anybody's) previous releases. Clean-cut, apparently computer-generated, imagery fronts simplified, slapstick gameplay. (We can't wait!)

The *Bonanza Bros*.

TV VAMP

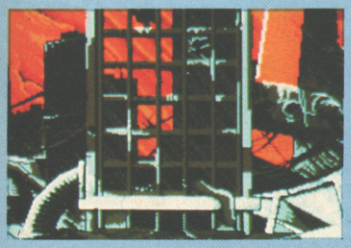
This rather odd looking thing is *Mad TV*, a new business simulation from Germany's Rainbow Arts. Hold on though, don't go away! This is actually a jokey, user-friendly little game, based around the trials and tribulations of the accidentally-appointed boss of a struggling TV station. You're job is to make sure your station is successful and gets higher and higher ratings, while at the same time pursuing the glamourous Betty – a task that puts you up against three computer rivals! Colourful, amusing, and more than a little bit 'strange', it sounds certainly, well, 'interesting.' Look for a review next month.

Before that though we should see *Logical*, Rainbow Art's contribution to the bulging puzzle game genre. You have these wheels with four holes in, you see, and you've got to rotate them to guide different coloured balls that are rolling along the connecting channels so that each wheel eventually contains just one colour of ball. A pig to try and explain, but easy to get to grips with in practice, it looks like being one of the better games of its type.

Forget C4, this is *Mad TV*.

DEUTEROS (August)

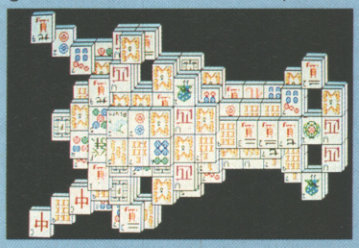
Another biggie, this is a gigantic space empire strategy game, the sequel to the much acclaimed *Millennium 2.2*, but reputedly a good deal better than it. Atmospheric, vast and controlled by an easy-to-use icon system, it garnered rave reviews (including 95% in Amiga Format!) when it was reviewed by many magazines earlier this year – and then never came out. If you go in for the *Supremacy* kind of strategy experience, then this is definitely one to watch out for.



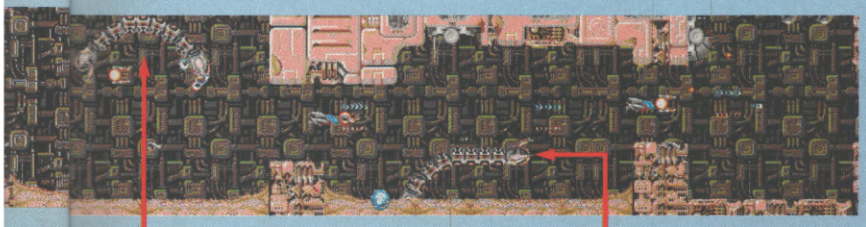
Space-bound strategy management, courtesy of *Deuteros*.

SHANGHAI II: Dragon's Eye (September)

Sequel to the excellent *Shanghai* (one of the most elusive of our All-Time Top 100 Games), *Shanghai II* features new tile layouts, animation and sound effects – with some of the new 'levels' in the shape of Chinese Calendar animals (snake, ram, rabbit etc), which 'come to life' when the last tiles are removed. Gameplay, follows the traditional Mah-Jong matching-pairs-up-to-make-them-disappear lines – it's guaranteed to be a hit in this office, at least.



The long awaited sequel to *Shanghai* is at last due to appear on home computers.



Yeuch, it's a disgusting metal alien snake thing!

Er, an alien. (I'd shoot it if I were you).

Mirror Image's outstanding range of budget releases continues with *The Three Stooges*, a slight-but-amusing Cinemaware graphical extravaganza, and – yes! – *Xenon 2*. The Bitmap Brothers' classic shoot-'em-up for only £10.99 has to be one of the bargains of the year. Look for releases in May and full reviews next issue.to be one of the bargains of the year. Look for releases in May and full reviews in the next issue.

The legendary *Xenon* 2.

***The Three Stooges*.**

CRIB SHEETS

Continuing our series of quick guides to people, publishers, programming teams and, erm, 'other things' for people who should probably know all about them already (but don't).

No2 EMPIRE

Contact: Marisa Pauwels, Unit 4, Stannetts, Laindon North Trade Centre, Basildon, Essex SS15 6DJ.
History: Entertainments International, parent company of the Empire label, started in '89 by Simon Jeffrey and Ian Higgins by distributing French Titus products in this country. Decided to launch their own software label on meeting Oxford Digital Enterprises, their main development team, now owned by the Empire label.
Affiliated labels: Titus, a French arcade game-based label, Disney Software (also French based – the US parent company has a contract with Titus and Nathan, a French educational software/books company), Readysoft, a Canadian company, and the American Paragon Software.
Biggest successes: Despite a critical, erm, 'mixed reaction', the first *Gazza* football game, *Gazza's Super Soccer*, did very well (*Gazza 2* less so). The Don Bluth adventure *Dragon's Lair* was number one in the Amiga charts for weeks, while *Team Yankee*, developed by ODE from an American book, was another big success. The biggest of the Titus games was *Crazy Cars 2* by a fair way. '*Team Yankee*'s the one we're most proud of,' a spokesperson told us. 'It got very good coverage in the magazines and a good response.'
Biggest failures: By general consensus, *Dick Tracy* has to be one of the worst games of all time. It was a disaster across most systems, and the Amiga version, from the little we've seen of it, was down there with the worst of them. Having said that, a fair number of Titus games have proved to be of less than, ahem, premium quality too.
Typical Empire game: It has to be said that games released on the Empire label have been all over the shop in the past – home produced soccer games, re-packaged American products like Paragon's *Doctor Doom's Revenge* and so on. The future, however, seems to hold a definite philosophy. That spokesperson again: 'We want to follow the path we've carved with games like *Team Yankee* – that's where we've really established our name as a good games publisher. Games like *MegaTraveller 1* (this issue) and thing's we've got lined up for later on follow in a similar sort of direction. We like odd licences – things which give us a bit of scope to experiment and go off in our own direction if need be.'
Things to come: An Amiga conversion of the Taito coin op *Volfied* – basically an updated version of *Qix* – is due around June, while *MegaTraveller 2* should be out next year. Perhaps more interesting are *CyberSpace*, *Eye Of The Storm* and *Deathbringer*. *CyberSpace* is ODE's conversion of a futuristic fantasy role playing game from Iron Crown Enterprises – we're in San Francisco 2090AD, and 'muscle-grafted punks, jacked-in Netheads and giant Megacorporations' rule. Using a development of the 3D engine seen in *Team Yankee*, *CyberSpace* promises to be a rather massive role playing adventure.
Eye Of The Storm is set in the Red Spot of Jupiter – a law-free zone some 100 years into the future. Another 3D filled vector thing, it offers 'discovery, trading, bribery, combat and lots of intrigue.' The team behind it are ex-Argonaut people, which sounds promising. Finally, there's *Deathbringer*, a parallax scrolling hack'n'slash outing in the *Shadow Of The Beast* mould. This ODE see as 'almost a bit of light relief' before they embark on *CyberSpace* – it should be the first of their new products we see.
Guiding philosophy: 'We want to move in the direction of producing large arcade/strategy games, with lots of attention to detail, long development times, a fair amount of role playing and, yes, higher prices and bigger boxes. We'll probably release fewer products in the future than we have been doing, but they'll all be of higher quality.' ■

THE EXECUTIONER

***Thrust* with strategy elements? That's the thinking behind *The Executioner*.**

Yes, that's right – it looks just like *Thrust*. What with this and *Zarathrusta*, there almost seem to be a mini-renaissance in *Thrust*-style games, along the lines of the recent proliferation of *Battlezone* clones (at least there's been a recent proliferation of them in this office). *The Executioner* is 120 planets long, features various worlds (aquatic, medieval etc) and an odd, between-level adventure bit. Released in May/June, it's the first game on the new Hawk label, though the second is only a month behind. That's *Championship Athletics*, an old-fashioned looking joystick waggler (don't say these are coming back too!) featuring pole vault, discus, shot-put, long jump, 100 metres and 11 other track and field events.

Colourful waggling from *Championship Athletics*.

DOMARK GETS RAMPARTS!

Domark has released its Atari/Tengen coin-op conversion list for the coming year, and it makes for quite a promising line-up. Ignoring this month's *Hydra*, we'll skip straight to June, and the release of the oddly-titled baseball simulation *RBI II* via Domark's own development arm The Kremlin. This is closely followed by the same team's conversion of the fairly so-so coin-op *Thunderjaws*.

Come October you can get to grips with some sweaty geezers in Teque's conversion of the beat-'em-up *Pit Fighter* – apparently it's looking remarkably similar to its arcade parent – while *Race Drivin'*, the official sequel to *Hard Drivin'*, should be ready for a spin in November. And finally we come to the real joker in the pack, that fave rave blend of action and strategy known as *Ramparts*, which is intended for release early in 1992. This, you may remember, is the game Bitmap Steve Kelly expressed admiration for last month, and while its cartoon wargame style may not be to everyone's taste, it'll certainly make for an interesting conversion.

● Whether Domark has the licence to convert Atari's latest oddity – the horse-shoe throwing (!) simulation *Schuuz* – has yet to be confirmed.

Oh dear...

Continuing the series in which we're gratuitously horrible to some of the Great Software Atrocities of our time.

No2 GHOSTBUSTERS 2 (Activision)

'If there's something strange, in your neighbourhood' - it's probably a copy of *Ghostbusters II*. Actually, strange is quite a dramatic understatement, because this game is utterly bewildering – the most bewildering aspect being that Activision thought they could get £25 for it. What you actually got for your money was two disks packed to the brim with excellent sampled music, digitised film stills, atmospheric intro sequences, and...that's it. It left you thinking 'You know, I'm sure there's something they've forgotten here...'

That's right, kids, they forgot the game. So what do you get? Well, two sub-games of laughable simplicity and precious little challenge, appallingly unimaginative gameplay, and a third section that made no sense whatsoever unless you'd seen the movie first. If you hadn't, you'd be dead inside fifteen seconds, and then you'd find yourself sent all the way (and we do mean *all* the way) back to the beginning. This, of course, meant you had to swap disks, though that wasn't too bad as by now you'd be used to it. Almost everything you could possibly do in *Ghostbusters II* called for a disk swap – even getting killed on the very first level – and the playing-time-to-time-spent-buggering-around-with-disks ratio was so completely ridiculous that some people thought they'd been sold a demo version by mistake. Mind you, there were people who said that this was a great film conversion because the movie was totally useless as well, but that wasn't much comfort to anyone who'd spent money on the thing. A disgrace.

Dropping down a very deep hole in *Ghostbusters 2* (which, incidentally, is where you should put your copy of it).

CASTLES

Keep your eyes peeled for *Castles* from EA, one of the hits of the American CES show in January, and potentially 'this year's *Sim City*' apparently. It's all to do with the building, defence and management of – yes! – castles in olde Britain. More news on the Amiga version, which is due later this year, as we get it...

FREE JEFF MINTER!

Jeff Minter has a new Amiga game – but you won't be able to buy it! Don't fret – this isn't bad news. In fact it's the opposite. You see, *Llamatron*, as it is known, is a shareware game – you can get it for free. All he asks is that if you like it you send him a fiver, and in return he'll bung you another game, the ancient *Defender*-like *Andes Attack*. *Llamatron* itself is a clone of Williams' classic coin-op *Robotron* – top down view, single screen mega-violence, you know the sort of thing. Pictured is the ST version – the Amiga one is due shortly. Ring Llamasoft on 0734 814478 for details.

Minter shares his wares, with *Llamatron*.

THE AMIGA POWER ROCK-HARD QUIZ

Compiled by Gary Penn

Oh dear. The Rock-Hard Quiz in Issue One was perhaps a little too hard – harder than intended, that's for sure. The answer to the fourth question wasn't in that very True Stories as stated. It should have been, but it's ended up in this month's instead. Anyway, without further ado, let's stroll on to this month's five Rock-Hard questions. No prizes – just the prestige of being a First Class Software Bore. As an added bonus, anyone who really reckons themselves should be able to come up with the common link between the five answers. The solutions are on page 15.

1) An adventurous new system makes its debut in Magnetic Scrolls' latest ...
2) It's *Judgment Day* for the team behind the conversion of which Sega arcade machine?
3) Which title comes from a bald guy with a vibrating hand?
4) Where would you be welcomed to *The Dungeons Of Drax*?
5) *The Fate Of Atlantis* is in the hands of Attention To Detail. But what did they do before they started working days?

AUDIOGENIC'S SPORTS ACTION RANGE

Audiogenic has announced that they're to launch a range of sports titles later this year. A spokesman revealed that the idea behind the new Sports Action series is 'to create a range of top end sports simulations which are the best of their type on the market.' Considering the quality of some of the other games in that field – the two *Kick Offs*, *TV Sports: Football* et al – that's a tall order indeed.

Still, the Sports Action series kicks off in September with *Sports Action Rugby*, its release coinciding with the sport's World Cup. It's being put together by veteran development team Denton Designs, who recently completed *Wreckers*, also for Audiogenic. However – and slightly confusingly – cricket lovers won't have to wait for a Sports Action simulation of their favourite pastime from Audiogenic. Indeed, this month should see the release of *Graham Gooch's World Class Cricket*, which uses television-style presentation and features shadows which alter according to the position of the in-game sun. Written by Gary Gray, it's one we should have a review of next issue.

MONKEY ISLAND 2

Guywood Threepbrush ('It's Guybrush Threepwood' etc – see review this issue) fans, and that includes this magazine, will be pleased to hear that we won't have to wait all that long for the sequel to *The Secret Of Monkey Island* – it should be early '92 if not the end of the year. This second swashbuckler sees Guybrush taking on the revenge-bent brother of the evil pirate ghost LeChuck, dispatched by Guybrush in the first game. New characters and new islands to explore join old favourites – this has to leapfrog into 'most-looked-forward-to' position as far as this office is concerned, at any rate.

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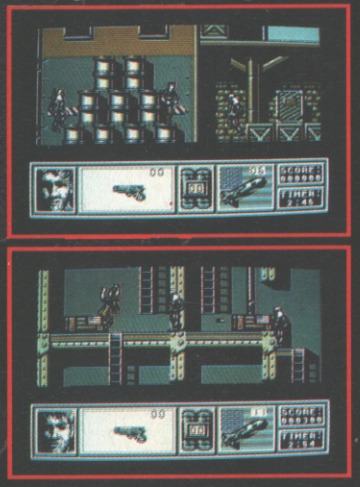

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ocean

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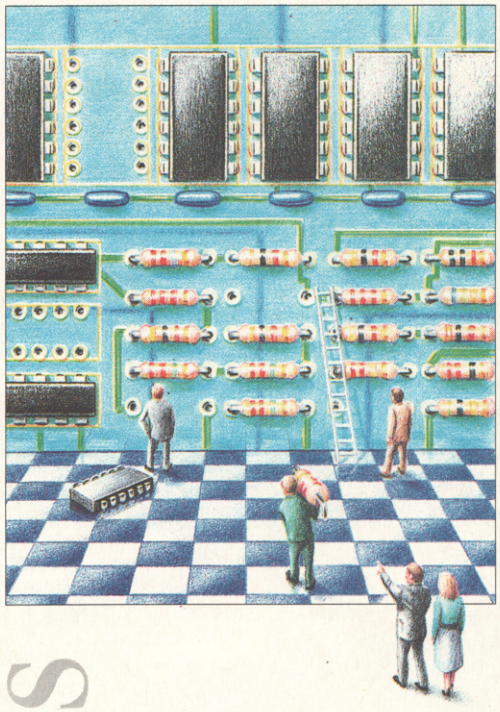

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***Double Dragon III* – the first martial arts beat-'em-up with a weapons shop?**

DD3 AND RODLAND

Storm – the people behind *SWIV*, which is enough to make anyone sit up and take notice – have a couple of new coin-op conversions on the cards. *Double Dragon III* continues the popular beat-'em-up saga, the most interesting new development being the addition of a weapons shop, but *Rodland* is something else entirely. Quite *Bubble Bobble*-esque in design, it's a cutsey platform game featuring the sickly sweetest candyfloss graphics in existence. A minor league coin-op hit, its stars are two pixie-like girlies (imagine My Little Pony on the Amiga) who grab baddies (including wind-up bathroom toy sharks) with their rods and bash them about a bit over their heads to kill them. Expect to see *Rodland* in September, with *DDIII* some time later.

An overdose of fluffy cuddliness – could *Rodland* be the cutest yet?

INDY'S BACK – BUT THIS TIME THERE'S NO FILM VERSION!

Yes, the man with the hat and the big whip is back once again, but this time he's not coming to the silver screen. Indiana Jones' latest adventure, entitled *Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis*, has been written by movie maker Hal Barwood, with contributions from a certain games enthusiast by the name of Steven Spielberg, and will be appearing in comic-book and computer form only, the latter in this country through US Gold. As was the case with *Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade*, US Gold is releasing two different versions – an adventure and an action game. Lucasfilm Games is producing the adventure – which bodes well, considering the standard of their *Last Crusade* adventure and this month's *The Secret Of Monkey Island* – with Attention To Detail, the team behind *Night Shift*, handling the arcade incarnation. Prices and release dates have all yet to be announced.

VAT INCREASE

You may have noticed some strange prices – £25.53 and such-like – quoted in reviews recently. This is due to the recent VAT increases, with many companies not rounding things up by a straight pound, but adding the VAT onto the old price. Other companies have decided to absorb the increase. It's probably best to take some prices with a pinch of salt until things pan out.

ROCK-HARD QUIZ: THE ANSWERS

Are you made of sandstone or granite? Here's where you find out just how hard you really are ...

1) *Wonderland.*
2) *Golden Axe.*
3) *Hammerfist.*
4) *Barbarian II: The Dungeons Of Drax.*
5) *Night Shift.*

Oh yes. The link is the fact that all five feature heroines.

RESTRICTOR

Arc Developments has a couple of projects on the boil for Thalamus, due for release this summer. *Restrictor* is an original shoot-'em-up employing a sprite-based (as opposed to polygon-based) 3D viewpoint similar in style to Sega's *Galaxy Force* coin-op. Arc's other work for Thalamus is a conversion of the cracking C64 shoot-'em-up *Armalyte*. Not only are Arc bringing up to date the way this blaster looks and sounds, they're also adding full-screen animated scene-setting sequences to help boost the sense of atmosphere.

HUDSON HAWK

Ocean has secured the licences to two new films – both of which look set to be sure fire hits. The first, which will appear last, is the long-awaited big-screen version of The Addams Family. Apparently, it will be packed full of famous faces, including Back To The Future star Christopher Lloyd. Further details of the game have yet to be confirmed.

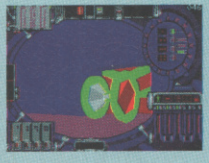
There is, however, more information about the second licence, which is for the new Bruce Willis flick Hudson Hawk. The Die Hard heart-throb is responsible for the story, and also plays the lead role under the direction of Michael Lehmann (Heathers, Meet The Applegates). The story has it that Hawk is the best art-inspired cat burglar there is – but he's now gone straight. However, various unscrupulous people want Hawk to steal the plans to Leonardo Da Vinci's alchemy machine. He agrees, and a manic mixture of action and near-slapstick comedy ensues. The film is due in late Summer, with Ocean's in-house team developing the game for some time later this year.

AMIGA POWER RECOMMENDS

After a bit of healthy, erm, 'discussion', here are our choices for best games of last month...

CHUCK ROCK
(Core Design)

Lovely graphics and more neat touches than you'd find in a big bag full of really neat touches make this platform-game-with-imagination one of the most lovable ever. Character is what separates *Chuck Rock* from the also-rans – it's got tons of the stuff – and it plays beautifully too. Worth buying just for the sampled 'Unga Bunga!' vocal.



CYBERCON III
(US Gold)

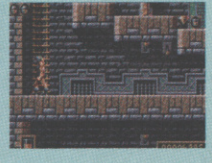
If you've only got enough money for one Amiga game this month, this is the one to get – because you'll be playing it for the rest of the year. It's huge, slick and tough, and it creates a whole world inside your computer. (Just don't get carried away and mix it up with the real thing, or you could get yourself in quite a lot of trouble for shooting up government installations!)

EYE OF THE BEHOLDER
(US Gold)

It's *Dungeon Master* the way it should have been done in the first place, and it's definitely the most accessible Dungeons And Dragons game yet (even if you don't usually like that kind of thing). It's got an intuitive control system, blood-curdling sound, graphics galore, and there's lots of red in it. What more do you want, blood? Well, it's got that too. Buy it!

GEM'X
(Demonware)

What's that you say? You're fed up with all these which are just great, you want a game to *love*? Well, your luck's in, because you'll love *Gem'X* until your hands fall off. The puzzle game itself is a good one, but the presentation is simply out of this world. Gorgeous music, perfect sound, speech that'll make your heart flutter, and beautiful Japanese girls all wrapped up in fluffy cuteness.



GODS
(Renegade)

Don't believe the hype, but *do* believe that this is a classic platform game, with an awful lot of knobs on. The stunning metallic graphics, the innovative gameplay, and the whole brilliant atmosphere will keep you glued to the screen for a long, long time. It's not often that you find a game that you'll want to play all the way to the end, but this is one of them. Yet another winner from The Bitmap Brothers.

PGA TOUR GOLF
(Electronic Arts)

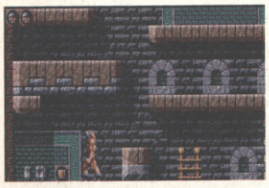
Leaderboard ruled the roost in the world of Amiga golf for many a year, but it was swept unceremoniously aside by the release of this, *the* definitive computer golf game. Loads of courses, loads of options, extremely slick presentation, every feature you could possibly want from a golf game, and some some very finely tuned gameplay too.

VIZ
(New entry, No 7)

This has been on release since the very tail end of March, so sales from all four weeks of this chart have boosted it to this lofty position. What do you put its success down to? We asked Andrew Wright of Virgin:
'Well, it's Viz, isn't it? It sells well over a million copies, and has a phenomenal pass-on rate – the publisher John Brown was on the radio the other day claiming eight people read every copy sold! – which means that approximately two thirds of the 14/25 age group "get it regularly" '.
Ahem. So you think that's directly translated into sales?
'Yes, and I think it'll translate into

***Viz* from Virgin**

the product having a very long shelf life too. What's been quite surprising is that we haven't had very many letters complaining about the bad language or other rudeness from consumers, which we were convinced we'd get. Boots haven't stocked it – mainly because it's got the word 'bollocks' on the cover, which is something the Viz boys insisted on – but WH Smith have, and it's currently at Number 2 or something in their chart.'



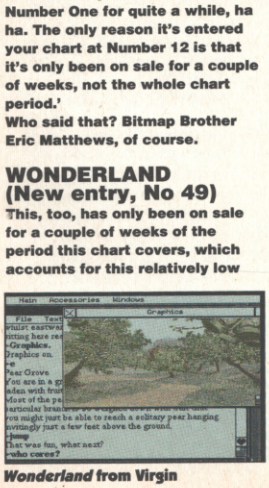
***Gods* from Renegade**

GODS
(New entry, No 12)

Everyone expected *Gods* to do well, and – yes! – here it is, one of the highest new entries in the chart.
'Actually, it should be the highest new entry. The game's doing very well – we expect it to be at Number One for quite a while, ha ha. The only reason it's entered your chart at Number 12 is that it's only been on sale for a couple of weeks, not the whole chart period.'
Who said that? Bitmap Brother Eric Matthews, of course.

WONDERLAND
(New entry, No 49)

This, too, has only been on sale for a couple of weeks of the period this chart covers, which accounts for this relatively low



***Wonderland* from Virgin**

AMIGA POWER GALLUP CHARTS

AMIGA TOP 100

***** Exceptional ***** Nearly there **** Very good *** Has its moments ** Flawed * Dire

1 (5) FANTASY WORLD DIZZY/ Code Masters £6.99 ****
2 (3) SPEEDBALL 2/ Image Works £24.99 *****
3 (1) LEMMINGS/ Psygnosis £24.99 *****
4 (NE) PGA TOUR GOLF/ Electronic Arts £25.99 *****
5 (4) SWIV/ Storm £24.99 *****
6 (7) FINAL WHISTLE/ Anco £12.99 **
7 (NE) VIZ/ Virgin £24.99 *
8 (NE) FORGOTTEN WORLDS/ Kixx £7.99 ***
9 (13) TREASURE ISLAND DIZZY/ Code Masters £4.99 ****
10 (8) LITTLE PUFF IN DRAGONLAND/ Code Masters £6.99 **

11 (NE) POWER UP COMPILATION/ Ocean £29.99 ****
12 (NE) GODS/ Renegade £25.53 *****
13 (12) SUPER HANG ON/ The Hit Squad £7.99 ****
14 (NE) ROCKET RANGER/ Mirror Image £10.99 ****
15 (45) CJ'S ELEPHANT ANTICS/ Code Masters £6.99 **
16 (14) KICK OFF 2/ Anco £24.99 *****
17 (58) YOGI BEAR & FRIENDS IN 'THE GREED MONSTER'/ Hi-Tec £7.99 **
18 (15) SUPER SCRAMBLE SIMULATOR/ Kixx £7.99 **
19 (2) TURRICAN 2/ Rainbow Arts £24.99 ***
20 (6) R-TYPE/ The Hit Squad £7.99 ***
21 (NE) DALEY THOMPSON'S OLYMPIC CHALLENGE/ The Hit Squad £7.99 **
22 (NE) NINJA RABBITS/ Micro Value £6.99
23 (NE) THE BARD'S TALE III/ Electronic Arts £25.99 **
24 (NE) SUPER MONACO GP/ US Gold £25.53 ***
25 (9) F-19 STEALTH FIGHTER/ MicroProse £29.99 *****
26 (23) WORLD CLASS LEADERBOARD/ Kixx £7.99 *****
27 (NE) 'NAM/ Domark £29.99 ***
28 (81) KICK OFF EXTRA TIME/ Anco £7.99 ***
29 (41) FAST FOOD/ Code Masters £6.99 ***
30 (16) MOONWALKER/ Kixx £7.99 *
31 (26) POWERMONGER/ Electronic Arts £29.99 *****
32 (22) DOUBLE DRAGON/ Mastertronic £9.99 **
33 (NE) SPEEDBALL/ Mirror Image £9.99 *****
34 (20) FISTS OF FURY 2 COMPILATION/ Virgin £29.99 ***
35 (17) FC MANAGER/ Energize £6.99
36 (57) BLAZING THUNDER/ Hi-Tec £6.99 ****
37 (NE) DEFENDER OF THE CROWN/ Mirror Image £9.99 ***
38 (18) SUPER GRAND PRIX/ Code Masters £9.99 **
39 (10) A-10 TANK KILLER/ Sierra £34.99 **
40 (11) PANZA KICK BOXING/ US Gold £24.99 *
41 (33) OUTRUN/ Kixx £7.99 **
42 NE) MIAMI CHASE/ Code Masters £7.99 ****
43 (29) CONTINENTAL CIRCUS/ Mastertronic £7.99 ***
44 (NE) GALDREGON'S DOMAIN/ Players £6.99 **
45 (30) HONG KONG PHOOEY/ Hi-Tec £6.99 ***
46 (24) GAUNTLET 2/ Kixx £7.99 ****
47 (25) VIGILANTE/ Kixx £7.99 *
48 (19) MIG-29 FULCRUM/ Domark £24.99 ****
49 (NE) WONDERLAND/ Virgin £30.64 ***
50 (NE) ACES OF THE GREAT WAR/ BLUE MAX/Mindscape £29.99 **
51(NE) TRACK SUIT MANAGER/ Alternative £7.99
52 (21) UMS II/ Rainbird £29.99 ***
53 (97) DAS BOOT/ Mindscape £29.99 ***
54 NE) OPERATION WOLF/ The Hit Squad £7.99 ****
55 (39) STEVE DAVIS WORLD SNOOKER/ CDS £9.99 **
56 (49) LOTUS ESPRIT TURBO CHALLENGE/ Gremlin Graphics £24.99 *****
57 (NE) STRIKE FORCE HARRIER/ Mirror Image £9.99 ***
58 (NE) KAMIKAZE/ Code Masters £7.99 **
59 (32) HOLLYWOOD COLLECTION/ Ocean £24.99 **
60 (99) JAWS/ Alternative £9.99 *
61(NE) MONSTER PACK – VOLUME 1/ Psygnosis £20.99 **
62 (54) AXEL'S MAGIC HAMMER/ Kixx £7.99 **
63 (70) AFTER BURNER/ The Hit Squad £7.99 *
64 (45) CLASSIC 4/ Energize £6.99 **
65 (28) M1 TANK PLATOON/ MicroProse £29.99 ***
66 (38) LAST NINJA 2/ The Hit Squad £7.99 **
67 (NE) BIG BOX/ Beau Jolly £29.99
68 (35) BARBARIAN 2/ Kixx £7.99 **
69 (34) PRO TENNIS TOUR 2/ Ubi Soft £24.99 ****
70 (36) ROBOCOP 2/ Ocean £24.95 ***
71 (42) CHAOS STRIKES BACK/ FTL/Mirrorsoft £29.99 ****
72 (53) THUNDER BLADE/ Kixx £7.99 *
73 (69) FA/18 INTERCEPTOR/ Electronic Arts £9.99 *****
74 (43) TEENAGE MUTANT HERO TURTLES/ Image Works £24.99 *
75 (56) MULTI PLAYER SOCCER MANAGER/ D&H £24.99 *
76 (91) ROAD BLASTERS/ Kixx £7.99 **
77 (44) WACKY DARTS/ Code Masters £7.99 **
78 (NE) TREBLE CHAMPIONS/ Challenge £7.99
79 (NE) SYSTEM 8/ Blue Ribbon £9.99
80 (NE) TRIVIA GAME SHOW/ Energize £6.99
81 (75) ADVANCED DESTROYER SIMULATOR/ US Gold £24.99 **
82 NE) POWER PACK/ Beau Jolly £24.99
83 (74) KICK OFF 2 (EXPANDED)/ Anco £29.99 *****
84 (NE) CHUCK ROCK/ Core Design £25.54 *****
85 (NE) ULTIMA V/ Mindscape £29.99 ****
86 (68) WHEELS OF FIRE/ Domark £29.99 ***
87 (NE) MEGATRAVELLER 1/ Empire £29.99 *****
88 (65) CRAZY CARS/ The Hit Squad £7.99 *
89 (NE) LEATHER GODDESSES OF PHOBOS/Mastertronic £9.99 ***
90 (88) WINGS/ Cinemaware (Mirrorsoft) £29.99 ****
91 (NE) ARKANOID 2/ The Hit Squad £7.99 ****
92 (31) TOYOTA CELICA RALLY/ Gremlin Graphics £24.99 ***
93 (96) QUATTRO ARCADE COMPILATION/ Code Masters £12.99 ***
94 (NE) OPERATION WOLF/ Ocean £24.95 **
95 (NE) SUPERCARS 2 Gremlin £24.99 ****
96 (NE) FERRARI FORMULA 1/ Electronic Arts £9.99 ***
97 (72) WIZBALL/ Hit Squad £7.99 ***
98 (89) GUNSHIP/ MicroProse £29.99 ***
99 (NE) NORTH AND SOUTH Action Sixteen £7.99 ****
100 (55) ELVIRA/ Accolade £29.99 **

entry point – it's actually Top 10 material. Andrew Wright again: '*Wonderland*'s selling a load, and a lot of that has to be down to hype and interest in the PC version, which has been out for a while. Adventure fans are putting this down as one of the must-buy releases of the year.'
The text adventure's not dead then?
'Apparently not, no.'

***Chuck Rock* from Core Design**

CHUCK ROCK
(New entry, No 84)

We loved *Chuck Rock*, so it's nice to see it making an appearance. Here's Richard Barcley of Core to tell us all about it...
'This is reflecting sales from just one week – or maybe even less than that, a couple of days or something – which is why it's so low down. It's actually selling better than we thought it would, certainly a lot better than *Car-Vup*, so we expect to do quite well out of it. It is, after all, a good game.'
You won't hear anyone round here arguing with you, Richard.

A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE AMIGA POWER CHARTS...

• These are the most up to date charts it's possible to bring you, covering sales over a period of four weeks – in this case, during the month of April. They're put together for us by Gallup (the people who do the BBC music charts amongst other things), based upon a continuing survey of shops up and down the country – from independent computer stores to large chains like WH Smith – bringing you the most comprehensive survey of sales we possibly can.

• The charts take the form of a Top 100 combining both full price and budget sales. If you really want two different charts you can divide it up quite easily yourself – this way we've done it you can see the relative importance of budget sales next to full price, which can be quite interesting. (Well, we think so anyway). Last month's positions are in brackets.

• We've rated each game out of five stars (five red stars for the really, really excellent ones) to give you an idea of how good the things that are selling really are. Games which don't get any stars aren't necessarily total rubbish – they're just the ones we've never played, so we couldn't really say. Having said that though, with plenty of them there's a perfectly good reason why we haven't played them – they look just too tedious to contemplate.

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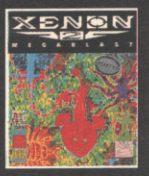

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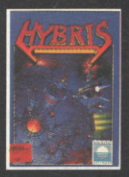

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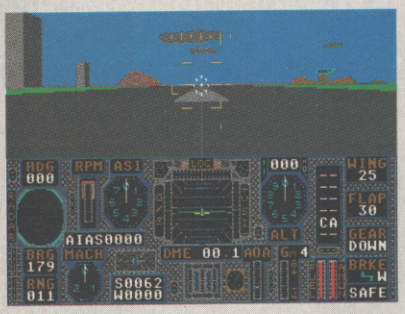

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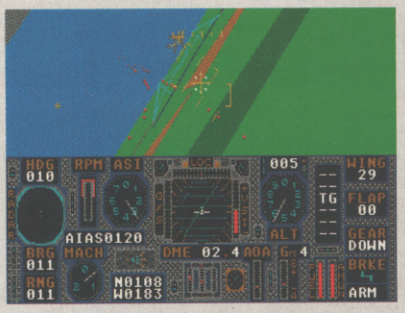

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Some comments from ProFlight Customers

"The best simulator on the ST by far."

"Very well done, the only flight simulator that gets it right! Thanks."

"Well done!!! It is real!"

"Superb - without exception the best on the market."

"Very impressive - brilliant manual."

"At last - a real flight sim for the purist."

"Your usual high standard of software. Excellent."

"For realism, beats anything I have ever seen on a home computer."

"Good fun & makes me nervous when flying dangerously - 10 out of 10."

"Brilliant manual, brilliant simulator."

"Another HiSoft winner!"

These are all unsolicited comments from users of the Atari ST version of ProFlight.

and the Reviews ...

"The sheer range of things to do makes this a winner and with future expansions planned this one could become as popular as the now classic Flight Simulator II."

"A great deal of thought has gone into how the plane handles and the controls are very responsive."

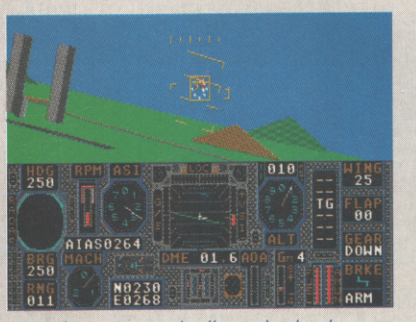
ST Action, March 1991.

ST Action A1 RATED

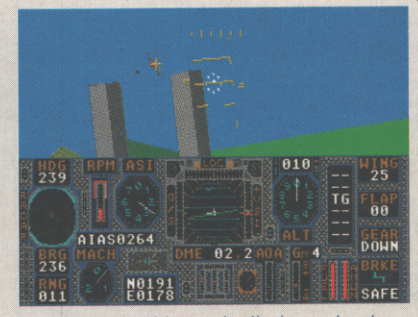
"ProFlight isn't the same as other fighter sims - it really does feel real."

"ProFlight is addictive ... if you've got the hang of less realistic simulators, moving on to ProFlight will give many more months of exciting flying. Very complex but enjoyable and well worth the clams!"

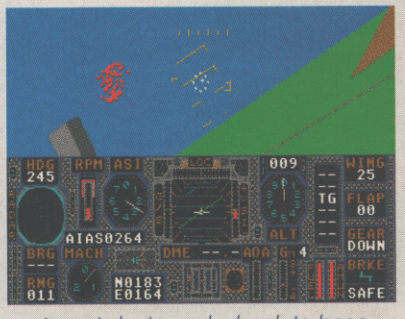
Atari ST User February 1991.



...change to missiles...locked on...



...heat-seeking missile launched...



...target destroyed...back to base...

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JUST WHO DO WE THINK WE ARE?

MATT BIELBY

Matt's got a free car this month. Budget Rent-a-car, who gave him the blue Fiesta (only 800 miles on the clock and a very posh stereo) he used to drive down to see the Bullfrogs, have refused to take it back. 'Every day I ring them up and ask them if they want it, and every day they say maybe someone will come and get it tomorrow. It's really silly.' Indeed it is. (Now why couldn't they have left him a Granada or something?)

Matt's been playing: *Gods* **('it's really growing on me, I have to admit'),** *Chuck Rock***, and** *Kid Gloves***.**

RICH PELLEY

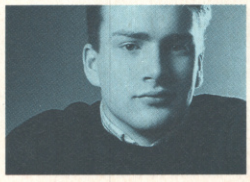
Rich has found Gary's achievement hard to follow (as have the rest of us). 'I didn't eat anything odd this month,' he admits. 'I did go to my school ball though – that was good.' What happened there then? 'Oh, nothing much. I didn't get off with any chicks, if that's what you're asking, though you'll no doubt pretend I did.' Yes readers, Rich got off with lots of chicks! Anything else? 'Well, I took my first driving lesson. It was okay – I didn't kill anybody.' Oh good. By the way, Matt recommends you rent a car from Budget. (It worked for him).

Rich has been playing: *PGA Tour Golf***.**

MARK RAMSHAW

Mark's not done anything much this month – but he is trying to sell a guitar. It's a Hohner headless electric jobbie, in stylish black, and would cost you £350 new – though 'honest' Mark's willing to take £250 for it. He's also got a 12 string acoustic to get rid of too for 'about 50 or 60 quid. I'm saving up for a brand new custom-built guitar, you see – despite the fact I can't actually play.' (Ring him at the magazine if you want to buy one!)

Mark's been playing: *The Secret of Monkey Island* **('and that's it – it's taken up all my time!').**



JONATHAN DAVIES

Jonathan's been a bit snowed under this month. Why? Well, because we gave him all the big, difficult games to review, that's why. *Wonderland* and (particularly) *3D Construction Kit* had him stuggling over manuals, for weeks. 'And *3D Construction Kit* isn't even a proper game,' he moaned. 'What are we reviewing it for?' Because it's all about creating games, we told him. Just get on with it, okay? (Some people,eh?)

Jonathan's been playing: *3D Construction Kit* **('and it's not even a proper game!')**

STUART CAMPBELL

The only thing Stuart wants to sell this month is 'all the crap games I've been asked to review.' Now hang on a minute, Stu – you know how many friends you've got among the software house fraternity at the moment anyway (ie none) and you're not going to make any more by saying things like that, you know! (Indeed, Stuart's been hiding out from Image Works – among many others – most of this month, particularly the poor deluded character who seems to think he's actually Nathan the Brat – see page 106).

Stuart's been playing: *Speedball 2*, *Gem'X*, **hide and seek.**

ANDY IDE

Andy still likes breasts, he says. Currently Gremlins 2 (the film, not the game) is lighting Andy's candle ('It's marvellous!' he told us in his inimitable way) as is the concept of doing a (drastically) shortened version of Hamlet on the Your Sinclair cover cassette. (He's editor, you see). It's a little known fact that Andy actually trained as an actor, so any opportunity to use his thespian skills comes in very welcome. Other details on Andy are pretty scarce at the moment, unfortunately – at the time of writing he was away on holiday (though doing what he wouldn't say).

Andy's been playing: *Centurion* **('but I don't like it much') and** *Rainbow Islands***.**

GARY PENN

Oh dear. Everything went sour for Gary Penn (25) when a childish boast down the pub went tragically wrong. Gary claimed that 'eating dog food is easy', accepting the £100 bet that said that it wasn't. The next day he was presented with a dog bowl, a can of Pedigree Chum (chicken flavour) and a tea spoon, while twenty admiring spectators gathered round to watch.

Poor Gary! Denied even a bowl of water or some Pedigree Chum mixer to wash it down, he ground to a slightly queezy-looking halt after only half the tin. 'I've learned my lesson,' he was heard to say afterwards. 'It's not big or clever to eat dog food.' Rumours that his nose is wetter than ever and his coat looks nice and shiny have yet to be confirmed.

Gary's been playing: *Atomino*, *Amiga Encounter*, *Lemmings*, *SWIV*, *Exile*, *Loopz***.**

SEAN MASTERSON

Sean is currently deputy editor of the C64 magazine Commodore Format, but before that he used to edit the fantasy role playing monthly White Dwarf, and (going quite a long way back now) work at Newsfield on Zzap!, where all little computer journalists seem to come from. At the moment Sean claims he finds chaos theory and 'the origin of everything' most interesting, followed a close second by current affairs – in particular international military strategy. He claims his life began at the age of 13 when he moved house (which doesn't sound too exciting to us, to be honest), though something interesting obviously happened around this time. He's fond of invertebrates 'because they seem so helpless' and fantasy role playing. Oh yes, and he's got an Amiga.

Sean's been playing: Lots of old Infocom adventures, *Captive***.**

GAME REVIEWS

Welcome to the AMIGA POWER reviews section. To start with we have 20 pages that cover the best and most interesting games of the month in the greatest detail. These may not be the ones that score the highest marks (though they most probably will be), but they certainly are the most *interesting*. Then, starting on page 76, there are the rest of the reviews. These are your coin-op conversions, your specialist interest games, your oddballs, your perfectly-decent-releases-that-cover-little-new-ground and, yes, your crap. High scorers that don't take much space to explain sit cheek-by-jowl with the most appalling rubbish. On page 86 we start our budget coverage, both original products and re-releases.

The bottom line (and The Bottom Line, for that matter) is simple – AMIGA POWER's flexible reviewing system allows everything the space it needs, be it 200 words on a budget re-release or up to five (five!) pages on the latest mega-complicated flight sim.

OUR SCORING SYSTEM (AND HOW IT WORKS)

Our reviewing philosophy is simple:

1) Most magazines vastly over-rate the majority of games they review. Here at AMIGA POWER we believe in calling a spade a spade (or whatever the current expression is) so you're going to get a lot of 30, 40 and 50 per cents as well as 70s, 80s and so on. After all, if you mark everything the same, the whole concept of scoring might as well go right out the window...

2) Most magazines vastly over-complicate their rating systems too. That's why we've only got one simple mark out of 100, and that's why the Bottom Line boxes contain short 'Uppers' and 'Downers' (ie what's good and bad about the game), the summing up sentence – and nothing else. You couldn't get much more to the point – except, perhaps, with the cut-down score boxes you get towards the back of the mag, that is...

3) Most of the time we'll all agree about a game – but sometimes we won't. That's when the little *On the other hand...* boxes appear, somewhere for a second reviewer to put his own, possibly very different, point across.

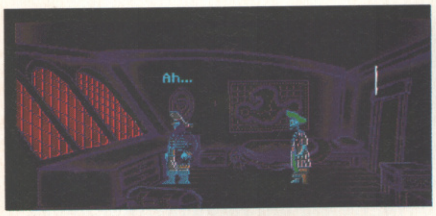
4) That's all you need to know.

GUIDE TO MELEE ISLAND

Mêlée Tours would like to welcome you to the fascinating and sometimes eye-opening place that we call 'home'. Thrill to the perpetual twilight! (Yes folks, the nightlife never stops!) Chat with the locals!
Yes, Mêlée Island really does have to be experienced to be believed. Once you're here, you'll never want to leave (which is just as well). NB: Don't feed the pirates.

The first port of call for any adventurer has to be Scumm Bar, home to scurvy seafaring types and the infamous Grog brew. If it's pirates you're looking for, then Scumm Bar is the place to be.

And here we see one Guywood Threepbrush ('No! It's Guybrush Threepwood!'). Oops. Sorry. Anyway, here's Guybrush about to have a nice friendly chat with some Important Looking Pirates.



Meanwhile...out at sea. Boo! Hiss! A bad guy if ever there was one. Don't worry though – I can see through his ghostly schemes.

Of course, being an island, there's bound to be a place to purchase a shiny new ship – at a price. (You'd be better off with a can of grog instead).

The Governor's mansion. Hmm. Looks quite interesting – in fact, it's just the sort of place that could really do with a closer inspection.

Of course it's not all swords at twilight. There's always time to sample the varied flora and fauna of Mêlée forest.

A troll? On a pirate's island? Smells fishy to me.

Glug, glug. It's amazing the gossip you can pick up on when you go for a little midnight swim at the docks.

Adventuring finally makes the mainstream with *The Secret Of Monkey*

Game: The Secret Of Monkey Island
Publisher: Lucasfilm/US Gold
Price: £25.99
Author: Ron Gilbert
Release: Out now

Ah, Lucasfilm adventures. Never something I really got the hang of, or took a shine to, to be honest. I found the earlier efforts distinctly C64-like in style, with the mouse-controlled input system as much of a hindrance as a help. To cap it all, I found it hard to get out of my head the idea that using moving graphics in an adventure wasn't much more than a gimmick, doing little or nothing to help gameplay at all.

That was an easy enough line to take with the early efforts. By the time *Loom* came along, with its stronger plot, improved graphics and easier player interface, my position was starting to look a little tenuous, however. The game may have been far too easy and a little ragged around the edges, but it was undeniably good. A quiet triumph for Lucasfilm, then – but nothing compared to what they've come up with now.

With *The Secret Of Monkey Island*, the mouse-controlled, graphic-adventure comes of age. This is a truly excellent game, easily the best I've seen this year. It's hard to think where to start with describing it, so let's take the traditional route and begin with...the plot.

Unlike so many adventure games, *Monkey Island* doesn't simply use the scenario as an add-on, easily changeable backdrop to the game – here the pirates/treasure/ghosts/island atmosphere so permeates every aspect of the game it would be impossible to imagine it without them. It sets a new standard of mutual-dependence between location and game that others will find bloody tricky to follow.

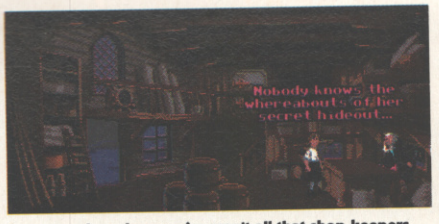
Specifics then. You play this helpless little guy called Guybrush Threepwood, a wannabe pirate, all-round turkey, and general starting-from-the-bottom everyman. You know the type. The game opens with his arrival at Mêlée Island, the idea being to guide his stumbling steps towards true piratehood, and beyond. (Beyond? Well yes – as things unfold, you'll discover that achieving the status of swashbuckler is only the beginning. There's much buckling of the swash and, erm, swashing of the buckle to be done after that. This isn't *Skull And Crossbones*, that's for sure.)

One of the very best things about the game is the way a fairly sophisticated sense of humour is incorporated into the game. I know what you're thinking – humour and computer games go together

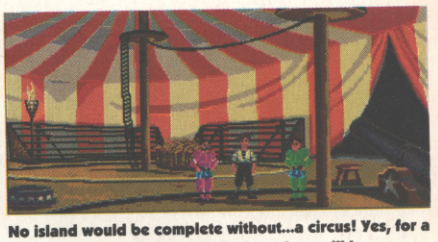
THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND

Hubba, hubba. It's our heroine. **Yes, it's Brian Blessed!**

Of course, Mêlée Island isn't just home to a few reprobates and dodgy geezers. Oh no. There's a full shopping complex (sort of) with all mod-cons, including a church there on the left.



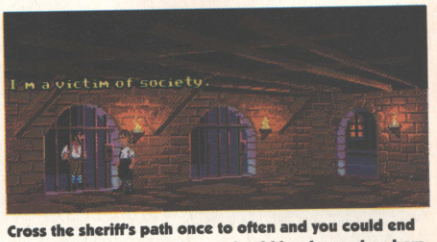
Fancy goods and souvenirs aren't all that shop-keepers can offer. A quiet word in the right ear can sometimes prove very productive indeed.



No island would be complete without...a circus! Yes, for a limited period only, the Fetucinni Brothers will be performing their feats of daring do (just as soon as they've finished arguing).

Eeek, deadly piranha poodles! Somebody, somewhere wants to keep Guybrush out of that mansion..

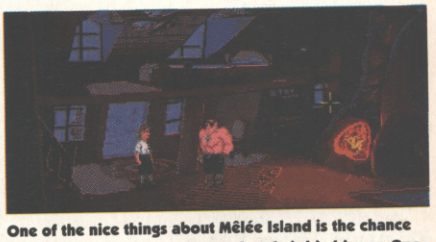
Nothing stops our hero. Unfortunately getting into the mansion was only half the problem. The sheriff looks a little non-plussed at Guybrush's breaking-and-entering.



Cross the sheriff's path once to often and you could end up like this poor soul. Pirates should be slumped on bars, *not* behind them.

Out in the wilds. Poor Guybrush looks very, very alone. Let's hope he doesn't stumble upon any vicious nasties.

I can't be sure, but I get a strange feeling that there's something interesting over there. It doesn't necessarily take a brave man to get across to the other side.



One of the nice things about Mêlée Island is the chance to meet new people, and marvel at their big biceps. One eye patch, two hooks – a pirate if ever there was one.

Island – a game so stupendously funny, they could make a film of it.

like Prince Charles and Sam Fox – but think again. As much as it can be said that anything does, it's the humour that really makes *Monkey Island*. It's intrinsic to everything. From the way just about every character in the game gets your name wrong ('Threepwood, my name's Guybrush THREEPWOOD!' you find him screaming for the zillionth time), to the patter of the used ship salesman (whose arms seem to jump about in time with his over-used mouth), who would rather give you his granny than lower his prices, it's packed with characters and situations to make you smile or simply burst out laughing. I particularly loved some of the commands possible ('Talk to men of low moral fibre' becomes an option when you confront some pirates), and the way you can even hold what is probably an intelligent conversation with the dog. Apparently, Fido actually gives the solution to the whole adventure away, but unless you know the doggy-lingo, you'll just have to fathom it yourself.

The key to being a pirate lies in word-play, not sword-play.

'The Secret Of Monkey Island creams 'em all in style'

Then there's the...but no. I'm not going to give you any more examples of the humour, partly because it'll spoil the whole experience for you when (not if) you buy it, and partly because, like all great comedy moments, you really do have to be there.

So leaving atmosphere, plot and the like aside for a moment, how does it all work in a more technical sort of way. Well, for a start you have to take on board that none of this character control lark is done by typing. Most of you will realise that already, of course, but just in case you've just tuned in to the Lucasfilm channel and aren't familiar with their thang, you may be pretty amazed to learn that the whole thing is done with the mouse, using a point-and-click interface. This means that at any point in time, the computer will display all possible options on-screen. Even when holding conversations with other characters, all you have to do is move the mouse onto one of the various possible lines on offer, then click the mouse button. Hey presto, your character speaks. It may sound a bit limited, but in fact it's anything but – because these options are so →

PARSERS OF EIGHT

Getting the hang of pirate-ese is no mean feat. Thankfully those swarthy types at Lucasfilm know how to meet the demands of the adventurer about town, and have come up with what has to be the ultimate in text-without-typing parsers.

This is the main action screen. The 'camera' always keeps Guybrush in the picture.

Anything spoken or any noises made are show on the main action screen.

This is the command area.

On the left all possible options for sentence contruction, or things to say are displayed.

The top line shows the full command ready to be executed.

The list on the right shows all of Guybrush's objects. Once the list exceeds five objects, arrows appear, allowing the player to scroll the list up or down.

1. Simply highlight the word you need with the cursor, then click the left mouse button.
2. By doing this a few more times, quite complex sentences can be constructed.
3. The default command is WALK, so simply clicking on an area of the screen with the left mouse button will instruct Guybrush to walk there.
4. Depending what you've chosen on the screen, the computer might highlight a suggested word (such as open, if you select a door). Simply clicking on the right mouse button will select this suggestion.

context-sensitive, that the command system comes across as being very comprehensive, while at the same time splendidly smooth and easy to use. Lucasfilm have managed to find a compromise between the fluidity and flair of a rigid storyline, and the intelligent realism of more free-form adventures – it's a system that allows you to more or less forget about the specifics of what you're actually physically doing (sitting at a desk with a computer in front of you, presumably) and loose yourself in the adventure instead.

GUYBRUSH SHOT THE SHERIFF

Oh, did I tell you about the music yet? No? Well I sure hope you like reggae – this is one program that really skanks (translation for non-music types: It's got a rather spiffing Jamaican beat). Bob Marley would be proud of these tunes (well, fairly proud). And that's about it for presentation. Great atmosphere, pleasing humour, lovely sound, the best input system we've seen yet, not to mention the pretty stupendous graphics (I thought I'd let you take that as read), there's only one aspect of the game we haven't really touched on yet – just how well has the actual adventure been designed? It's the sort of thing that can really sink (sorry, accidental pirate pun) an otherwise excellent game.

Which is why I'm pleased to say

'This is one program that really skanks'

Monkey Island has been designed better than any adventure I've ever seen before. (Had you worried for a minute there, eh?) Everything shows such attention to detail and consistency of form that you are completely drawn into the whole piracy experience – it would be no exaggeration to say that no matter how you progress through this game, the resultant series of events could easily be used as a script for a pirate movie. And what a box-office smash it would be! (Okay, so a couple of the jokes have been ripped out of The Princess Bride, but they were worth telling again anyway).

Just think for a minute – how many times have software companies boasted that their product really is 'Just like taking part in a film', and 'A truly cinematic experience'. And how many times have you thought 'Hmm, well, sort of' and been vaguely disappointed? Well, be disappointed no longer – here's the first game I've ever seen which really justifies such claims (even though – to Lucasfilm's credit – nobody's actually making any!). We're not just talking about screen displays that look as if they were done under the guidance of Ridley Scott, all eerie blues and arty angles, either – it goes further than that. Move your guy, and he'll actually react correctly to the 3D-ness of the scene, the camera panning all the while. And of course that groovy music I've already mentioned actually changes to suit the scene too.

The lastability of the game is the only sticking point, but this is a problem that can't be avoided with adventures. A projected 30 hour play time may not seem like much for £24.99, but when it's 30 hours of pure fun and satisfaction, it's not much of a grumble.

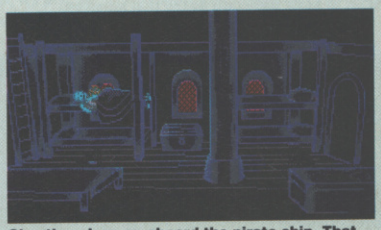
If this review seems just *too* enthusiastic, there's a very good reason for it. I can't remember the last time I enjoyed playing a computer game so much. Even the fighting sequences are done with flair, insults being much more important than sword-fighting skills. Forget all those milestone adventures (*Zork*, *The Hobbit*, *Lord Of The Rings* et al) – for sheer enjoyment and general all-round perfection *The Secret Of Monkey Island* creams 'em all in style. I just can't wait for the sequel. • *MARK RAMSHAW*

The hustle and bustle of town life. With so many shops you sometimes get the feeling that you are going around in circles. Maybe that nice man on the corner can give directions. (And what about that chap on the left? He looks a pretty dodgy geezer).

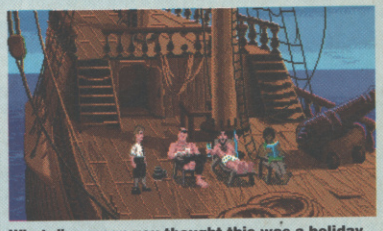
COMING SOON TO AN AMIGA SCREEN NEAR YOU

When you go to the movies, you always get a nice trailer of forthcoming films. And of course these trailers tend you show you some pretty teasing parts of the film. So, in classic flea-pit tradition, here's a taster of what to expect once you've progressed beyond the proving ground of Mêlée Island.

Spooky! That's a ghost ship for sure. (Why on earth didl decide to become a pirate?)



Ghostly goings on aboard the pirate ship. That guy looks pale. (Must be resting his bones).



What d'ya mean you thought this was a holiday cruise? (Looks like we've got a mutiny).

You won't get to see the delights of the Caribbean with your head in the sand.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

No tale of piracy and buried treasure is complete without some, erm, interesting characters. *The Secret Of Monkey Island* is no exception.

Just don't ask what happened to his eye!

Don't ask him either! (Actually, he proves useful later on.)

Erm, nice pair of ear rings, missus.

Can you read that? It says 'Ask me about Loom'.

UPPERS It's taken ten years, but the first truly accessible adventure is finally with us. Keep this game in a plastic bag, because the atmosphere really does drip from it. Graphics, sound, and plot – everything gels perfectly.

DOWNERS Erm, I can't really think for any. Except perhaps for the sluggish way in which the parser scrolls, and for the oh-so-slow save and load screen. 1 meg required.

THE BOTTOM LINE

If you love adventures, buy it. If you don't, buy it anyway. In fact even if you don't own a computer, rush out and buy your copy now (and get yourself an Amiga while you're out). A ripping yarn and no mistake.

90 PERCENT

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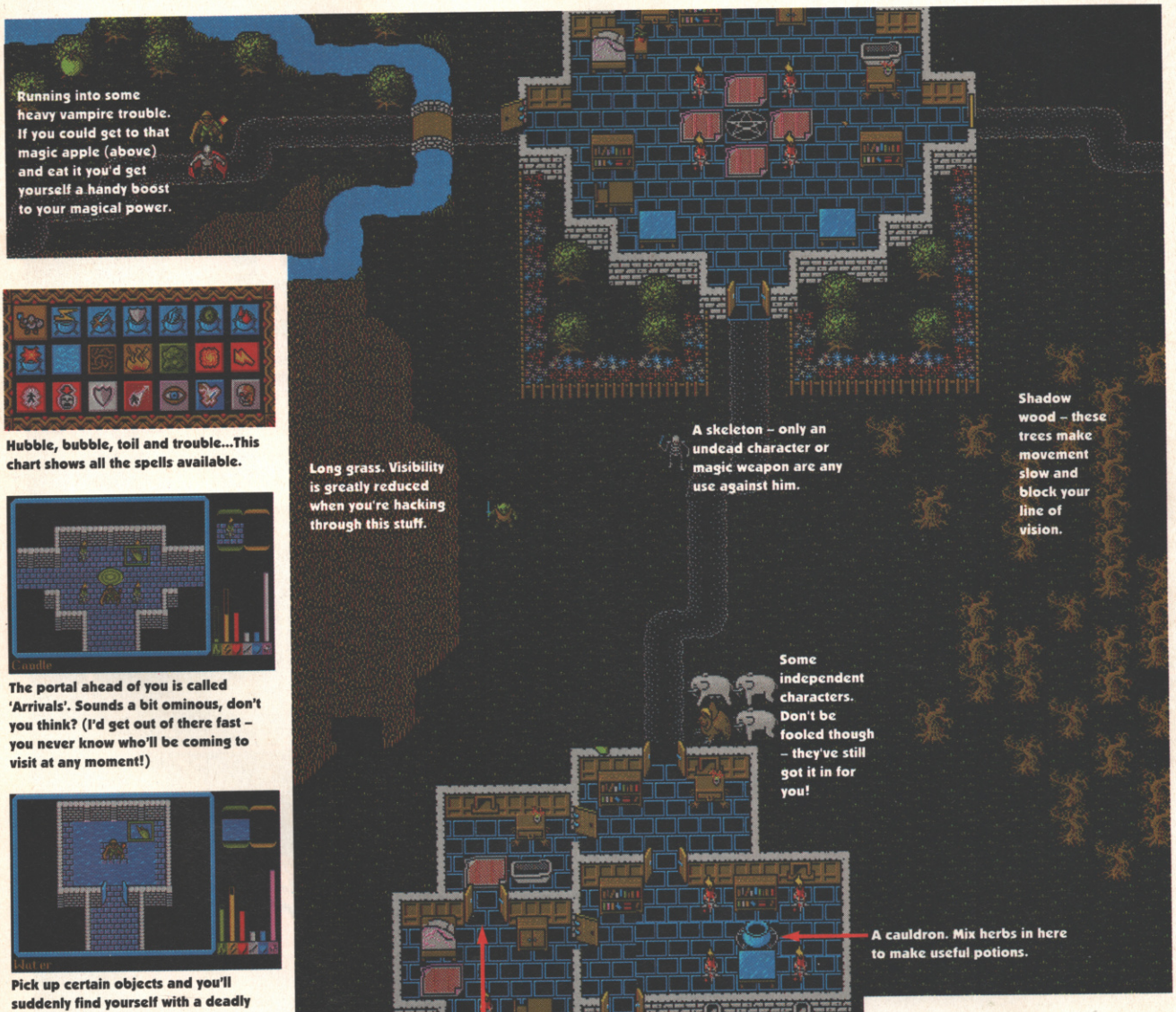
LORDS OF CHAOS

A mere selection of the mysterious beasts on offer...

By marrying aspects of his classic *Laser Squad* and the 8-bit cult game *Chaos*, Julian Gollop has produced a new slant on the fantasy/strategy genre.



Running into some heavy vampire trouble. If you could get to that magic apple (above) and eat it you'd get yourself a handy boost to your magical power.

Hubble, bubble, toil and trouble...This chart shows all the spells available.

Long grass. Visibility is greatly reduced when you're hacking through this stuff.

A skeleton – only an undead character or magic weapon are any use against him.

Shadow wood – these trees make movement slow and block your line of vision.

The portal ahead of you is called 'Arrivals'. Sounds a bit ominous, don't you think? (I'd get out of there fast – you never know who'll be coming to visit at any moment!)

Some independent characters. Don't be fooled though – they've still got it in for you!

Pick up certain objects and you'll suddenly find yourself with a deadly moat to cross before you can escape.

A cauldron. Mix herbs in here to make useful potions.

The wizard's house – one of several possible starting locations.

It's a good idea to always close doors behind you. You never know what may come looking for you later, and an extra obstacle gives you just that little bit longer to prepare yourself, cast a spell etc. One of the prime requisites for *Lords Of Chaos* is forethought.

SCENARIO 1 – THE MANY COLOURED LAND

Things may look peaceful here, but that's because you can only see what's happening within the visual range of your characters.

Game: Lords Of Chaos
Publisher: Blade
Price: £24.99
Authors: Martin Beadle, Nick Gollop, Julian Gollop
Release: Out now

This 16-bit conversion of the latest game from Julian Gollop (programmer of the classics *Chaos*, *Rebelstar* and *Laser Squad*) has been eagerly awaited by – well, me, basically. Promising to be a hybrid of all the three previous games – well, except *Rebelstar* – *Lords Of Chaos* boasts nearly all of the features and spells of the original *Chaos*, but in a strategy game setting much closer to that of *Laser Squad*. The player (or players - up to four

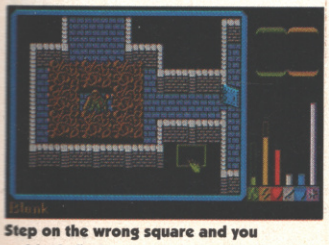
It seems a few other unwary adventurers have visited this room before you. (Ulp.)

can play at one time) finds himself (or themselves) in one of three types of scenario from which he (or they – well anyway, you get the idea) has to escape within a set number of turns, preferably carrying lots of treasure and having killed the evil Torquemada (or some other big bad guy wizard) into the bargain.

Our hero is helped by a handful of wizardly weapons, and also by a number of spells, varying from the creation of magical creatures such as dragons, goblins, unicorns and, erm, crocodiles to the summoning of fire, water, and strange forms of malignant plant life.

Unfortunately, nasty old Torquemada can also call on all these powers, so clearly there's going to be a good messy fight with lots of entrails a-flying before anything gets resolved. And that's just about where I come in...

Let's get right down to it, shall we? I've been playing this game for quite some time now, and if there's one thing missing from it, it's 'chaos'. (Actually I haven't found many 'lords' in it either, but let's deal with the 'chaos' for now.) Things seem to take the form less of a life-or-death, do-or-die, against-all-the-odds battle to the finish, and more of a gentle country stroll, taking in the occasional encounter with some mildly belligerent wildlife, but nothing to write home about any more than if you swatted a wasp. At least in the earlier levels, I found that most of the difficulty present in *Lords Of Chaos* came from simply trekking across the landscape, as some of the terrain types take quite a heavy toll on your movement points. This leads to the game having a rather stop-start kind of feel to it, as you negotiate the slightly unwieldy menu system, move each piece four or five spaces and then run out of action points, end your turn, watch not very much happen to all the other creatures in the game, then start the whole palaver again.



Step on the wrong square and you suddenly find yourself surrounded by thick and dangerous tangle vines.

Even when nearing the time limit, there seemed to me to be very little in the way of immediate or pressing danger, and this lends the proceedings more of the air of an orienteering expedition than a high-powered showdown of strategy and sorcery. Why orienteering? Well, the game uses a novel approach, in that your view of the overall map is realistically related to the information you would actually receive from the characters under your control. Hence, each character can only see a certain distance in front of him, so any areas of the map (including other characters) which are outside his visual range, or obscured in some way (by trees, walls, thick undergrowth etc) appear on the screen as black squares until a character moves closer to them. In this way, you never quite know what you're going to stumble across until you're practically on top of it, which does bring a certain element of suspense into play.

'My reaction has to be, "Is that all there is?"'

Unfortunately, it can also necessitate a rather tedious amount of searching around in forests for concealed treasures and suchlike which are only revealed when you get very close to them indeed, and since such areas are usually comprised of fairly heavy terrain the going can be very slow. The air of slowness is also compounded by the rather sprawling nature of the play area, compared to the quite spartan sprinkling of creatures, with the result that slices of fast-moving thrills are few and far between.

In *Laser Squad*, the relative slowness of the actual gameplay was compensated for by some pretty heavy firefights with some serious weaponry. As the majority of the fighting in *Lords Of Chaos* is of the hand-to-hand (or beak-to-claw) variety, there isn't the same impression of action and excitement, and it's something that proves more noticeable a drawback than it might first have seemed. Where the other games were finely and superbly balanced between thoughtful planning and frenetic violence, that balance has gone for a burton here, and it leaves the game looking suspiciously thin. Even when there is a burst of hack-and-slashing, it's of a pretty subdued nature, and it takes a while for any results to unfold.

This is my only real problem with *Lords Of Chaos* – this not-much-going-on-ness – as in all other respects it's a very well-executed thing. The control system, while a little bit clumsy in use, is very easy to get the hang of (at least if you've played *Chaos* it is, but it feels like it would be simple to grasp for complete newcomers too), the graphics are clear and colourful, and it's easy to just dive into, although you can set things up much more carefully if you want to try a particular strategic approach. There's a wide range of difficulty levels for experienced players, several different types of scenarios with different dangers and objectives, and the opportunity to build up your character over a number of games, in the best role-playing tradition.

In general then, *Lords Of Chaos* has a lot going for it, and if you're more of a strategy purist than I am then you probably won't be too bothered by the lack of a good-going bloodbath. There's enough depth to keep you engrossed for a good few weeks, and enough scope for tactics to ensure that you never have to play the game the same way twice.

All the same, it's quite hard to see just who this game is going to be bought by. It's still likely to be too 'arcadey' for real wargame fans, and those people who liked Julian Gollop's previous efforts may well be put off by the aforementioned lack of any zapping.

I was really disappointed when I played this – I'd hoped and expected on the strength of its predecessors that this would be brilliant, and sadly that just isn't the case. For all the game's depth I just wasn't drawn into it in any significant way. *Lords Of Chaos* is by no means a bad game, but at the end of the day, my reaction has to be, 'Is that all there is?'. • *STUART CAMPBELL*

UPPERS A big challenge, and lots and lots of lastability. There's enough in there to keep strategists happy for months.

DOWNERS It takes a painfully long time for anything very much to actually happen.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Well worth a look if you are a strategy or fantasy fan, but if you're a *Laser Squad* addict looking for more of the same, exercise extreme caution.

66 PERCENT

CASTING AN EYE OVER THE ICONS

The key to playing *Lords Of Chaos* lies in the proper use of its icons. Although they are fairly self-explanatory, it's always a good idea to really learn your way around.

CAST AT GROUND/AT AIR – to summon one of your walking or flying creatures.

INFORMATION – gives more details about whichever square the main screen cursor is currently resting on.

THROW AT GROUND/IN AIR – for throwing weapons such as spears against walking or flying targets.

READ – read any scrolls you might happen to pick up.

FIRE AT GROUND/IN AIR – for use of ranged weapons (such as bows) against walking or flying targets.

CENTRE – centres the screen on your wizard.

USE – use whatever the wizard is currently holding (or, failing that, his hands) on the contents of the cursor square.

RIDE – used to let the wizard mount any of his creatures which can be ridden.

SELECT RIDER – dismounts the wizard from whatever creature he is riding.

BIG MAP – gives an overall view of the whole level (except any areas of the map which have not yet been explored).

LAND/FLY – toggles between ground and air movement for creatures capable of either.

FILL VIAL – Used to collect potions which have been mixed in a cauldron from various herbs found around the play area, to produce various spells which can restore the wizard's vitality, increase his combat power, etc.

PICK UP – use this to, er, pick things up.

CHANGE OBJECT IN USE – changes the object currently in the wizard's hand.

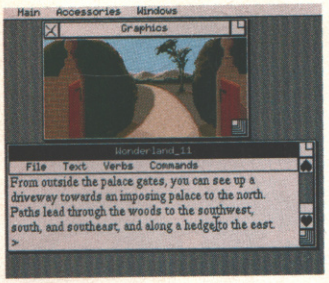
DROP – this icon is used to, er, put things down.

EAT – eat food to restore the wizard's spell-casting powers.

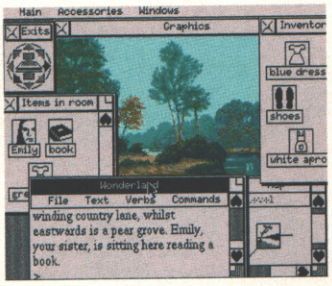
DRINK VIAL – drink a previously-mixed magic potion.

DRINK FROM CAULDRON – potions can be drunk straight from the cauldron. This means that the potion will take immediate effect. (Of course this is the only way to use a potion if you don't actually own a vial).

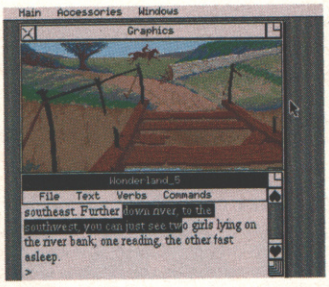
Julian Gollop has produced a new slant on the fantasy/strategy genre.



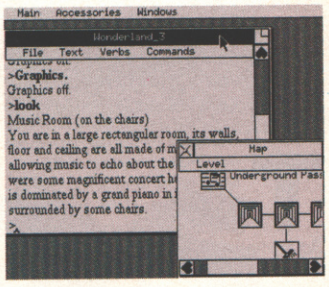
Wander on to royal land and pretty soon you're likely to get your head chopped off. A pass might help.



Going for a total windows environment. The combination of evocative graphics and helpful icons certainly looks impressive.



The session window actually offers many word processing luxuries, such as cut-and-paste. Now that's a good idea.



***Wonderland* minus the splendid graphics does, it must be said, begin to look more like Mediocreland.**

Touted by its creators Magnetic Scrolls as the most sophisticated adventure ever, *Wonderland* raises the question – is the most complex *necessarily* the best?

Game: Wonderland
Publisher: Virgin
Price: £24.95
Author: Magnetic Scrolls
Release: Out now

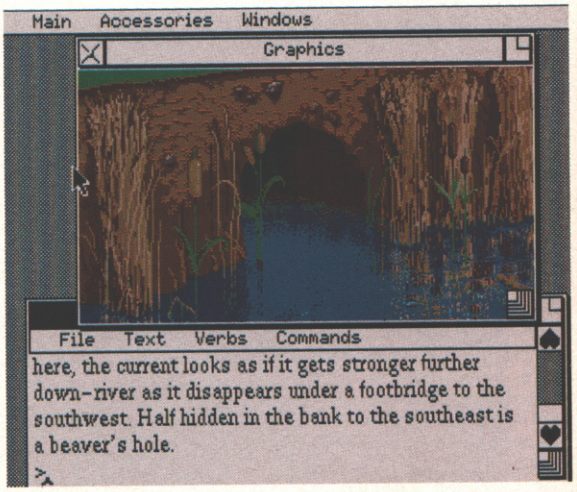
Lewis Carroll was an odd sort of a chap. For a start he wasn't called Lewis at all, or even Carroll – his real name was Charles Dodgson. He also liked writing maths books and taking photographs of little girls. Blimey! So it isn't hard to see why Magnetic Scrolls decided not to give him much of a billing on the packaging of their computer adaptation of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. Or, indeed, call it Alice's Adventures in Wonderland at all.

What they have done, though, is attempted to revolutionise adventure games as we know them, taking the unfashionable 'N, E, GET LAMP' concept and turning it into a force to be reckoned with in the Nineties etc. Quite a tall order, eh, readers?

But before we go any further, let's take a look at the plot. It's Alice in Wonderland, basically, so if you've read the book you'll know just what to expect. Alice gets a bit bored of sitting on the riverbank, so when she sees a rabbit running past looking at its watch and going 'Oh dear, I shall be late' she gives chase and follows it down its burrow. Having done so she finds herself in a spooky world of talking playing cards, Cheshire cats, Mad Hatters and giant sherbet-smoking caterpillars. (What she doesn't find, mind you, are the Lion and the Unicorn or Tweedledum and Tweedledee. They're all characters in Alice Through the Looking Glass.) It goes without saying that you're Alice, and you've got to solve a whole load of puzzles and get out of *Wonderland* intact.

'These initial hurdles could be enough to put many punters off'

At the heart of *Wonderland* is a fairly straightforward adventure game parser. Text descriptions of your surroundings appear as you move from location to location, and you tell the game what you want it to do by typing in ordinary(ish) English commands. As parsers go this is a fairly standard (if sophisticated) one, no different really to the sort of thing that's been around for the last four or five years. It'll understand everything from the basic 'E' (to go east) to huge, unwieldy sentences like 'PUT EVERYTHING WHICH IS IN THE CUPBOARD EXCEPT THE POTION IN THE CRATE THEN GET THE POTION AND PUT EVERYTHING FROM THE



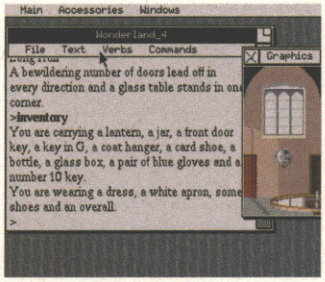
One of the nice aspects about *Wonderland* is the way that text quality has not been sacrificied for the sake of having lots of pretty pictures. It actually manages to combine both.

Here's the Duchess' house, scene of all that business with the pots and pans, the baby that turns into a piglet and the pepper.

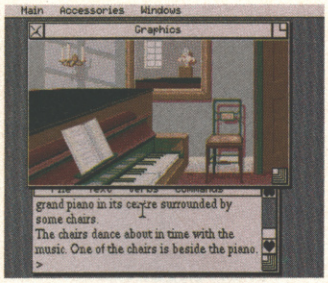
ON THE OTHER HAND...

With an impressive perfect-bound manual, four disks and promises aplenty, I'd have expected *Wonderland* to be something special. But no. Beneath all its finery, *Wonderland* is little more than a reasonable text adventure. The biggest surprise is that it takes 1Mb to run it – no doubt due to the enormity of the picture data and having to run a 'new' window system. What a pity the time spent on producing that wasn't put to better use developing a more interactive textual environment, with a larger vocabulary, greater context sensitivity, and a wider range of responses. When given the chance to interact with a book, I'd like to be able to do all those things that don't happen in it – in this case, explore the peculiar world that is Alice's dream – but I couldn't. Sadly, *Wonderland*'s vocabulary is limited (when you find yourself in a field with freshly turned earth it's hard to resist the temptation to dig, but you can't, simply because the parser doesn't understand the word DIG, and yet it's smug enough to pass comment on such banalities as LAUGH, YES and NO) and its responses are repetitive and unimaginative ('I don't understand WORD.', 'You can't see a WORD here.' Yawn.) to the extent that the carefully generated sense of atmosphere is all but destroyed. This is wrong. It is not user-friendly enough. An example – in one instance, I tried to HIT, TOUCH and even KISS Emily only to be told 'You can't reach Emily from here'. Fine, but when I decided to WALK TO EMILY so I was within reach, the same response was given! There's more that's wrong with it too, but my time is up. I'd recommend buying a couple of budget-priced yet superior Infocom classics instead. Those, or a decent hardback copy of the book. – *GARY PENN*

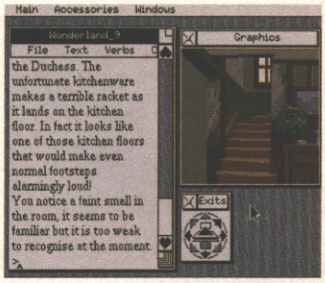
Time to get down to some serious adventuring. What's this, a wiggly-waggly path? Oh well, so much for seriousness..



It may understand the most complex sentences under the sun, but a single command can work wonders.

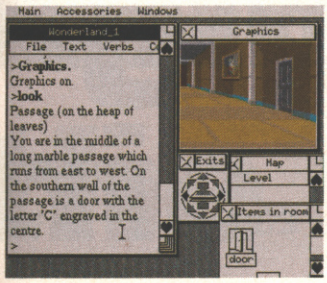


Lurking somewhere in this room are the two keys you'll need to get out of the rabbit's hole. But where? (Oh, and try going through the mirror.



Listen, do you smell something? Using the compass window to get around *Wonderland*.

DERLAND



Fitting all the windows onto one screen can prove difficult. Magnetic Scrolls have thoughtfully provided four different screen modes, from 16 colour low resolution to interlace mode – the choice is yours.

CRATE IN THE CUPBOARD' (don't ask me – I copied it out of the manual). But what makes *Wonderland* different is the amount of clobber Magnetic Scrolls have tacked onto this basic framework. Say, for example, you wanted to pick up a bottle. You could be boring and type 'GET BOTTLE', I suppose. But there are at least 300 more convenient ways of doing it. You could scroll back to a previous 'GET BOTTLE' command and copy it, saving a few keystrokes. No? Right, how about going up to the Verbs menu, selecting Get and then picking Bottle from the sub-menu that appears? Alternatively you could open up the Items in Room window and the Inventory window and drag the bottle icon between the two. Failing that you could even go to the Graphics window, click on the bottle in the picture and choose Get from there. (I make that four ways. Ed) Whether you actually find yourself using any of these extra facilities is another matter. Most of the time it seemed to me to be quicker just to type things in.

Once you've got to grips with all of that you can start solving puzzles. It starts off easily enough – just follow the rabbit down its hole (not forgetting to take a pear/lamp) and case the joint. You'll notice that almost every location has a picture of some sort to go with it (often animated) and possibly some music too. Pretty soon, though, you'll have picked up everything you can lay your hands on and will be wondering how to enter *Wonderland* proper. Two fairly serious puzzles need to be solved, neither of which have much bearing on the book (most of the later ones do, though) and, although some pretty heavy hints are dropped in the text and the Help facility, these initial hurdles could be enough to put many punters off adventure gaming for evermore.

While *Wonderland* has a very professional feel to it, it could be argued that if you strip away all the extra bits and pieces (which, let's face it, serve only to make things a bit more accessible without actually altering what's underneath) you're really just left with a text adventure, a genre which probably evolved as far as it's likely to go several years ago. The other side, however, would jump to its feet and claim that an adventure packs in far more depth and is likely to require a lot more skill than most arcade games, and besides, *Wonderland* is rather a nice one and to dismiss it for being an adventure would be terribly closed minded.

But what do I think? While admitting that the extra menus and windows (with the possible exception of the map) don't really add much, I did enjoy playing *Wonderland* enormously. It's a good rendition of the book, capturing its storyline perfectly while tweaking it enough to present a challenge even to those who know the plot inside out.

The pictures are nice too. I reckon that if you've had a good crack at adventures before and they've left you cold, *Wonderland* isn't likely to convert you. But if you like them, and are looking for something to sink your teeth into, it'll be more than enough to light your torch. • *JONATHAN DAVIES*

UPPERS Decent disks to dosh ratio. Slickly put together, with a very Lewis Carroll feel to it, and some corking graphics to boot. The Mac-style presentation manages to grab the attention of those who would normally avoid adventures.

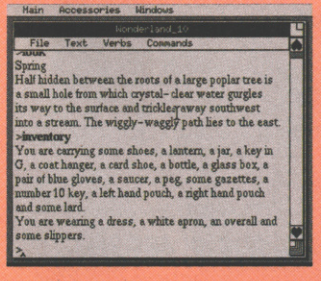
DOWNERS Underneath all the flashy add-ons is a fairly ordinary adventure game, the graphics take ages to load, and of course it's another 1 Meg only game. And, when will programmers realise how much of a pain multi-disk access can be?

THE BOTTOM LINE

An atmospheric and cerebrum-bashing adventure game that isn't quite as innovative as it might lead you to believe.

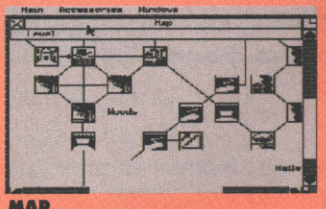
81 PERCENT

ALICE THROUGH THE WINDOW SYSTEM



SESSION WINDOW
This is where everything 'happens'. Text descriptions of what's going on appear here, and you can type standard adventurey commands into it. The scroll bar on the side means you can review the last few pages of your adventure and cut, copy and paste bits of it if you want. Pull-down menus at the top provide a 'shorthand' for most popular commands, so you hardly have to type anything at all (if you don't want to).

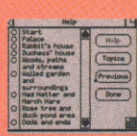
GRAPHICS
Most locations have an associated picture, which is often animated. Clicking on an object in the piccy causes a menu to appear listing all the things you might want to do with it – another way of avoiding lots of typing.



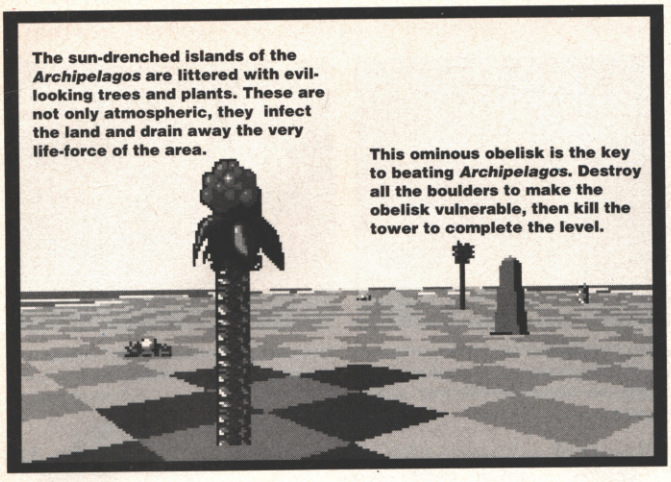
MAP
You'll never need another piece of squared paper again! A map is automatically constructed as you go, and you can move straight to any location by double clicking on it.

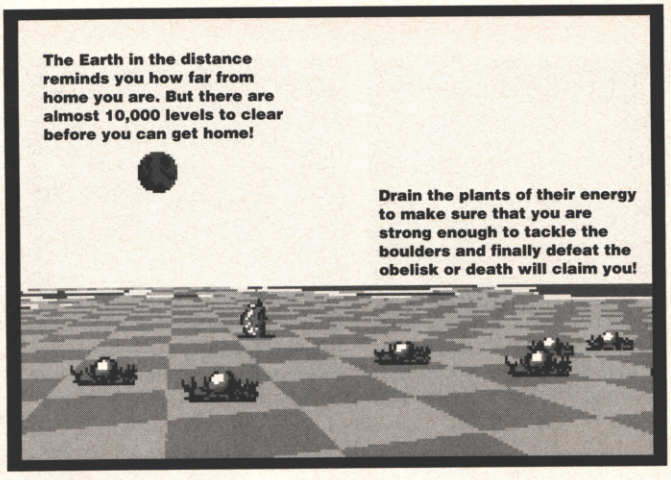
COMPASS
And mixing up east and west will become a thing of the past too – you can move in any direction by clicking on the appropriate arrow (as long as there's an exit that way).

INVENTORY/ ITEMS IN ROOM
Your inventory (the stuff you're carrying) can be displayed in a window, as can the objects in the room. You can pick up and drop things by dragging their icons around, and do other things by choosing commands from menus.



HELP
There's help available for most problems in the game, ranging from cryptic to blindingly obvious. Each time you use it your score takes a hammering, though.





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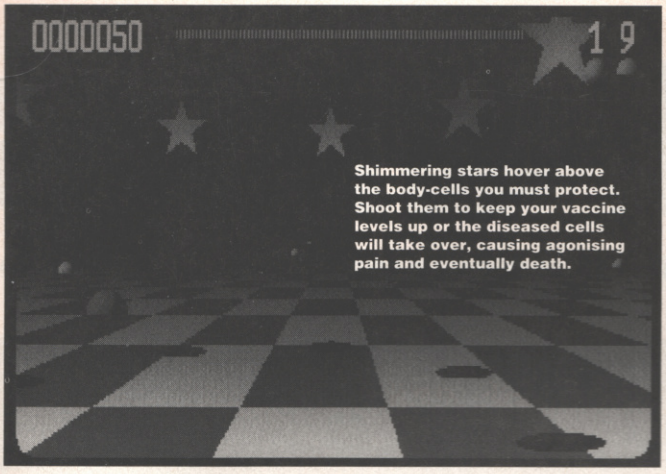
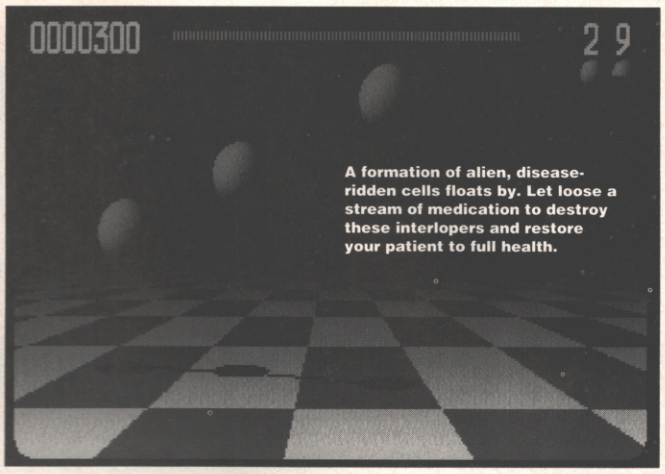


Shimmering stars hover above the body-cells you must protect. Shoot them to keep your vaccine levels up or the diseased cells will take over, causing agonising pain and eventually death.



A formation of alien, disease-ridden cells floats by. Let loose a stream of medication to destroy these interlopers and restore your patient to full health.

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...Probably.

SWITCHB

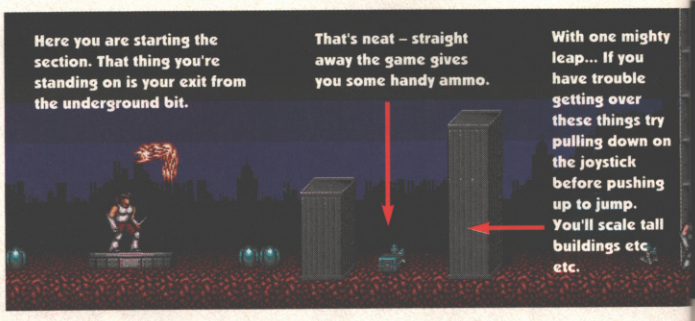
The last word in Japanese arcade adventures arrives in the form of *Switchblade II*

Game: Switchblade II
Publisher: Gremlin
Price: £25.99
Authors: George Allan, Paul Gregory, Barry Leitch
Release: Out now

Now here's a funny thing. *Switchblade II* reviewed in the very same issue as the original *Switchblade* (check out the budget section to find out what we thought of the first game). This follow-up is a bigger proposition altogether, and sets out to silence one of the major criticisms of *Switchblade* – the one that all the screens looked the same. There's loads of graphic variation in this sequel, with forest scenes, underground scenes, scenes in the same tunnel-and-cavern network as the original, industrial dockland scenes, and lots more besides. So, er, that'll be that criticism silenced, then. In many ways, *Switchblade II* visually resembles *Midnight Resistance*, but the gameplay actually contains several elements of both Rainbow Arts' *Turrican* and the more recent *Gods* from Renegade.

LEVEL 1 - PART 3

Having negotiated the first section and the underground caverns, it's back to the surface to meet the obligatory end-of-level baddie. Then it's on to Level Two and into the daylight for some even meaner *Switchblade* action...



MORE THAN THE SUM OF ITS PARTS?

Um, well, that's a tricky question. There isn't much in *Switchblade II* that hasn't been seen before (and seen several times for that matter), but I don't think I've seen a game that did all of it quite so well until now. There aren't any weak elements in here at all. The game is instantly playable, the graphics are uniformly beautiful, the sound is atmospheric and solid (although to be scrupulously honest, it's more 'good enough' than 'absolutely stunning'), the difficulty is very well-judged, there's no reliance on the infuriating 'learning from experience' (ie killing you without any warning and then relying on you to remember exactly where it happened) cop-out that completely ruined *Rick Dangerous 2* for me, and there's always plenty going on to keep you occupied.

Even when you've gone right through a level, there's likely to be at least one secret room you haven't found yet, or one secret entrance to another huge section of play area to stumble across. (I'm still finding new bits just on the first level). And 'huge' is a word that keeps coming back to me when I think about this game. Each level is massive, and with six of them to hack through, separated by some pretty mean end-of-level guardians – you'll be plugging away at this game for absolutely ages before you get anywhere near completing it, especially as the difficulty rises perfectly throughout, letting you progress further each time you play but getting phenomenally hard nearer the end.

This is a feature it shares with its predecessor, but the difference with *Switchblade II* is that the completely new graphic style of each level gives you a real incentive to keep at it.

Even though most of the elements of *Switchblade II* aren't new, some of them are still executed in an innovative style. The idea of collecting money and buying power-ups, for example, is as old as the hills, but here at least some of the power-ups are a little more imaginative than the usual three-way-fire-and-smart-bombs type of bog-standard weaponry. I'm thinking particularly of the 'dragon', a bizarre and elegant weapon which consists of a small, well, dragon (you won't be surprised to hear) which flies around you in what seems to be a fairly random manner, killing any baddies it happens to bump in to. Quickly though, you realise that it never flies far away from you before homing back in on your position, so you can use it to carefully eliminate enemies that would otherwise have caused you serious problems – those lurking at the tops of ladders, for example. For some reason, this is such an incredibly satisfying thing to do that it gives the game a whole new lease of life, as well as giving you ➔

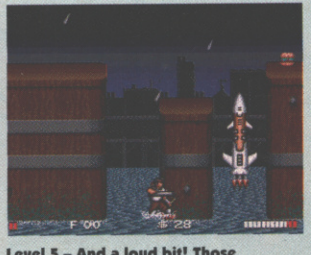
Level 2 – Big, expansive coin-op style exteriors. Mind the gap!

Level 3 – Bright, cute, colourful and sharply defined arcade-style graphics.

SO SIZE ISN'T EVERYTHING..?

No, but it's pretty important, all the same. One of the nice things about *Switchblade II* is that it delivers a lot of play area for your money, as these very different screens show...

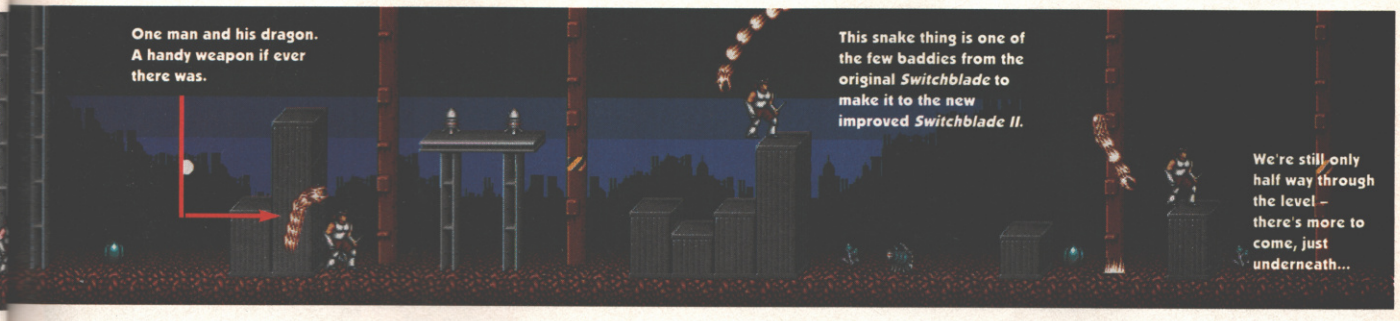
Level 4 – A quiet bit. Through that door lies a lovely bonus room.


Level 5 – And a loud bit! Those missiles never stop, so run for it!

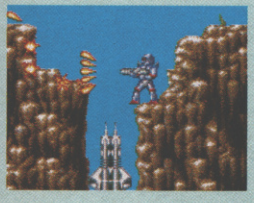
Go through that glowing portal on the screen to the left, and you'll find yourself in the Shop. Here you can buy extra lives, better weapons – you know the sort of thing.

BLADE II

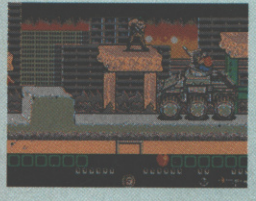
but (and this is the really weird bit!) it isn't even Japanese!



SWITCHBLADE II VS THE REST OF THE WORLD

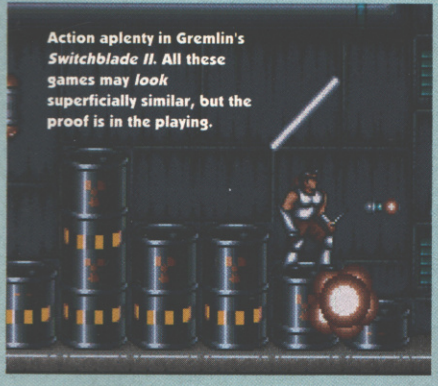


TURRICAN/ TURRICAN 2
Switchblade II has much better graphics, and identifiable landmarks that make the levels seem a lot less unfocused.



MIDNIGHT RESISTANCE
In *Switchblade II* the levels are a lot bigger, and it doesn't have the awkward control system.

RICK DANGEROUS 2
Switchblade II has much less in the way of invisible danger, hence much more reliance on skill rather than dumb luck.



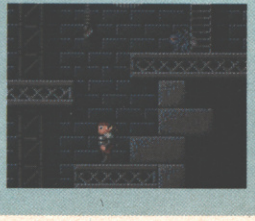
Action aplenty in Gremlin's *Switchblade II*. All these games may *look* superficially similar, but the proof is in the playing.

As you may have guessed by now, I don't think *Switchblade II* is merely *one* of the best games of its type, I think it's the very, *very* best.

Which would be all very well, except half the office don't agree with me and have challenged me to prove it to them. Here, then, is a handy series of comparisons to show them why...

STRIDER/ STRIDER 2
Well, the *Striders* looked nice, but where was the gameplay?

GODS
Though some people prefer *Gods*, you have to admit *Switchblade II* is much more of a pure action game, and much faster-moving.



SWITCHBLADE
Er, no contest here I'm afraid. Everything that was good about *Switchblade* is present in *Switchblade II*, but bigger and better.

PROGRAMMING WITH AN EDGE

We had a quick chat with George Allan, the programmer behind *Switchblade II*, and put a couple of points brought up in the review to him. Here's what he had to say...

Q. So, George, can you go through all the games you worked on before this one?
A. I did *Venus* on the Amiga for Gremlin, but that's all. This is actually only my second game.

Q. Blimey. What kind of things influenced you while you were writing it?
A. Well, we had quite a lot of freedom with the game design, but obviously a lot of the ideas are based on arcade games like *Strider* and *Shinobi*, as well as a few console games we liked.

Q. Looking back, is there anything you'd have liked to have done differently? We've noticed that the baddies don't change all that much from level to level, for instance.
A. We didn't really spend as long on the design stage of things as we should have done, I suppose, but the enemy graphics are all down to the graphic designer. It's not my fault! Seriously though, we simply ran out of time.

Q. And what about not being able to jump onto ladders, or fire when you're climbing and all that kind of stuff?
A. Actually, we'd have liked to have Hiro firing from ladders and while he was running along, but we just didn't have enough memory for all the sprite data for the extra actions. The main sprite uses 60K alone as it is!

ALL IN A DAY'S WORK

Nice touches abound in *Switchblade II*, from the startling arcade-like graphics to other, less obvious, but nonetheless equally 'neat' things like these...

An extra life. Trivia fans (or addicts of the original *Switchblade*) will notice that it's actually the guy from the first game. Isn't that sweet?

The end-of-level baddie from Level Four. It acts rather like an evil version of your own dragon weapon. (And, of course, it's as hard as nails).

Here's a quick sneak preview of the last level. The action takes place in several volcanoes, so precise timing is needed to get through uninjured.

Scattered around the later levels are many of these little rooms. They usually contain very useful stuff, such as extra lives, more ammo and the like.

a really clever and smug feeling. (Until you lose concentration and get knocked off a platform by one of the bad guys and plunge to your death at the bottom of an incredibly deep lift shaft, that is).

I'm also a dead sucker for rain effects in games (which this has got) and having the first level in a similar style to the original game to create a feeling of continuity is a great idea. My favourite little touch, though, has to be the way that extra lives appear in the form of the character sprite from *Switchblade*. It's only a tiny touch, but it's typical of the amount of trouble that's been taken on this game to make everything feel just right.

SO WHAT'S WRONG WITH IT, THEN?

Well, not much, really. The only niggles are tiny, tiny things, like not being able to jump on to or off ladders, or the baddies being a little bit characterless and not changing much from level to level. Then again, there are compensations – like being able to shoot things that are slightly off-screen, the natural and flexible jumping system, and the way you stop momentarily when you're going down a ladder and reach a floor level, which can be invaluable when you need to tackle a baddie with split-second timing.

Generally, the feel is of a very well put-together game indeed – it's very rare that you get annoyed by something that isn't intended to annoy you. There's enough frustration to make it addictive, but never enough that you become disheartened, and if *Switchblade II* was a coin-op, I can quite confidently say that I'd be chucking money down it for quite some time. It's an arcade game in the purest sense – there's little thinking involved, but it's so nice to play you won't even notice that your brain has atrophied. And what's more, it won't matter. Superb. • *STUART CAMPBELL*

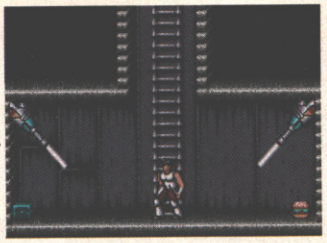
UPPERS Playability reigns supreme, but not at the expense of anything else. Sure to last a very long time indeed.

DOWNERS The end-of-level baddies are a bit of a pain, in an unimaginative kind of a way, and some in-game music to go with the sound would have been nice.

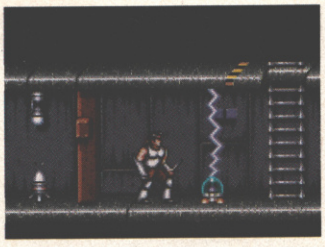
THE BOTTOM LINE

A completely excellent platform game that wouldn't shame an arcade. Easily the best example of its genre so far, and one of the Amiga's most impressive all-round games of any kind.

87 PERCENT



These guns fire at regular intervals, so just wait until they stop momentarily, then run!



These nasty-looking devices are actually harmless. Simply knife the control panel.

Lots of these spikes pop up throughout without warning. Tread very carefully.

This fast-moving plane drops dozens of horrible bombs on you – kill it quickly.

After a rather timid start in the first levels, the bad guys soon come out in force.

ON THE OTHER HAND...

This is more of a 'slight correction' than an 'I don't agree with you at all' type of an *On the other hand...* box, I'm afraid. Yes, I agree with Stuart – this is a jolly good game. It's pretty, it plays very fast, and it feels very much more like a 16-bit console or an arcade game than something you'd expect to find on an Amiga. In fact, I'd even go so far as to say it looks a lot more like an arcade game than anything I've *ever* seen on the Amiga.

However, I don't think it's particularly new or original or different, and this would knock the mark down quite a bit for me. It's certainly not as clever, as interesting or as absorbing as *Gods* is, for instance – a game that's really grown on me since last issue, it has to be said. No, I'd call it a low 80s rather than a high 80s and leave it at that. – *MATT BIELBY*

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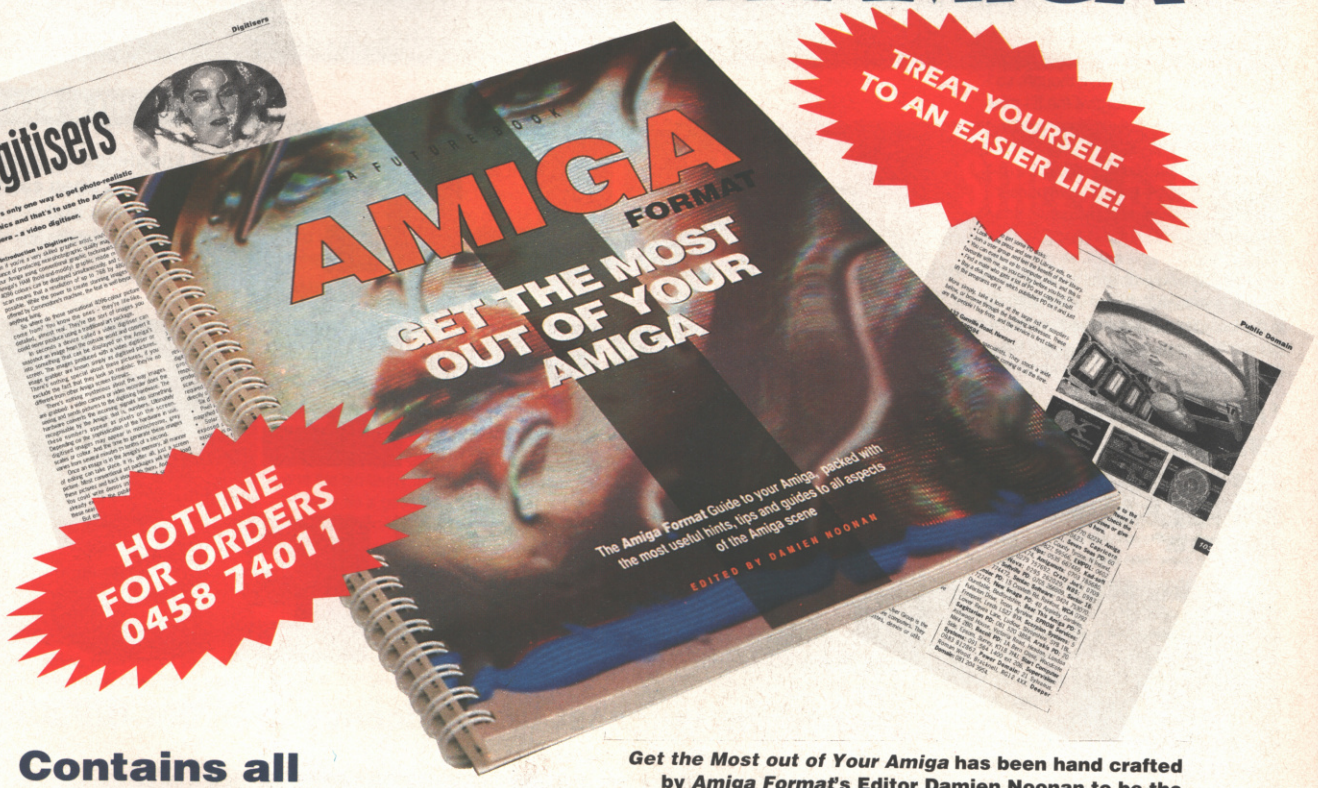

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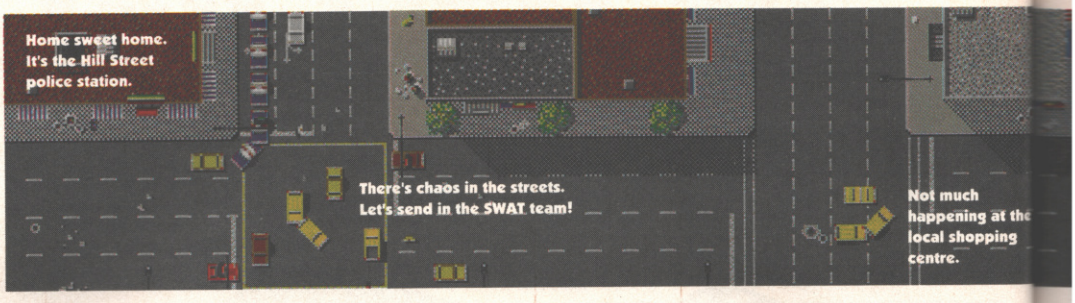
Game: Hill Street Blues
Publisher: Krisalis
Price: £24.99
Author: Rob Hill, Mark Incley, Simeon Pashley
Release: Out now



HILL STREET BLUES

It may not be the most timely licence ever, but *Hill Street Blues* triumphs in two important ar

LIFE IN HILL STREET

A good knowledge of geography comes in handy when carrying out investigations and apprehending criminals.

I'm at a bit of a disadvantage reviewing this game, because I've never actually watched a single episode of the TV series on which it's based in my life. The rest of the office have given me a quick beginner's crash course in it though, so I should be okay – just forgive me if I miss any important little plot points or subtle nuances along the way.

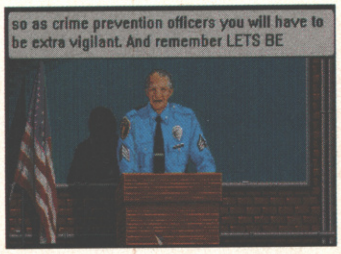
So okay, into the actual game. This lends itself in some ways to comparison with *Sim City*, in as much as it puts you in control of a city precinct – you play Captain Furillo – where you've got to deal with half-a-dozen problems at once by zipping (although I use the word 'zipping' in the loosest possible sense here) around the scrolling map, getting to where the action is and doing something about it.

'*Hill Street Blues* is a Jekyll and Hyde kind of a game'

The 'doing something about it' bit is where things start to differ slightly. Here there's no solving the problem with a simple budget decision – you have to get out there and get your hands dirty. Being a cop game, the problems are all of an identify-perpetrators-then-chase-them-and-catch-them nature, but being a licence of Hill Street Blues, with its 'realistic social milieu' (well, that's what the rest of the office told me), things turn out to be rather more complicated than they are in, say, *Narc*.

Not that you'll be tempted to use your SWAT team all that often anyway – a policeman's lot is not all high-speed chases and big shoot-outs, and sometimes it'll seem a lot more sensible to simply put up a road block to trap the baddies rather than take any more drastic action. Be careful though, because blocking roads tends to create traffic jams, and if the whole city transport system grinds to a halt, you're not going to be Captain Popular.

Your ultimate objective is to get promoted to Police Chief, but since to do that you're going to have to keep 90% of the people happy with your work for a significant length of time, it's not something you'll be achieving in a hurry (even at the easiest of the five difficulty levels).

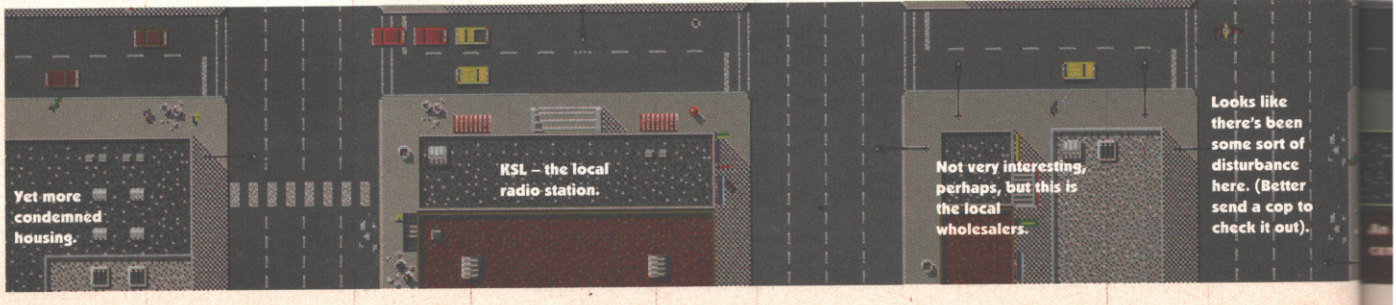


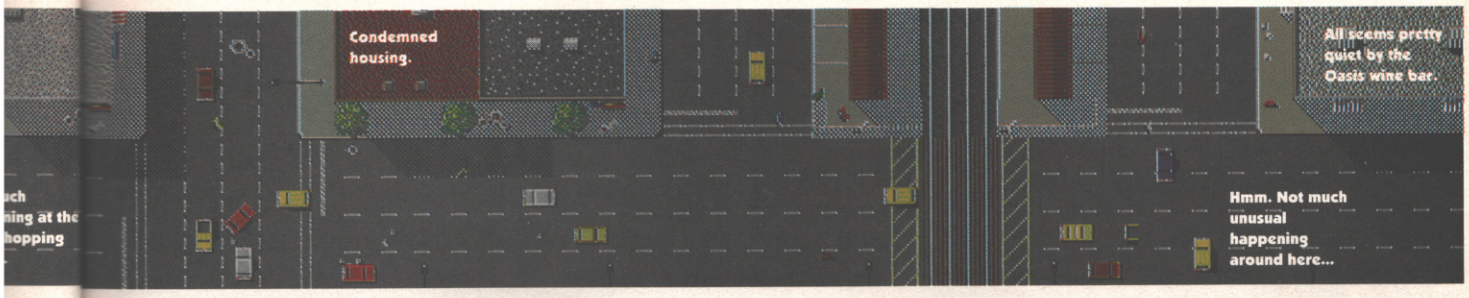
No *Hill Street Blues* computer game could possibly be complete without this scene...

The street at night, when the criminals *really* come crawling out of the woodwork.

At first, *Hill Street Blues* is a little hard to get a handle on. The mass of icons which are used to control your actions are easy to get mixed up in, and things can swiftly become totally overwhelming. There are annoying little bugs too – such as the way an officer on foot can quite happily cross roads and railway lines, oblivious to any traffic that might also be attempting to use the same section of highway. Rather than getting messily run down, the character appears to simply walk under the car or train and emerge smiling at the other side. It's a silly oversight and knocks a bit of a hole in the game's realistic feel. (Or maybe I'm just a sicko and it teaches me right for trying to get my characters deliberately killed in the most unpleasant manner possible...)

I guess what you have to bear in mind here are that the graphics are functional and representative of what's going on rather than arcade-style perfect, with painstakingly worked out collision detection and the like, so it's not too big a fault. What really matters is that the inhabitants of the city (some 400 of them) are all unique and identifiable, so it becomes quite easy to believe in them as real people, and thus get quite closely drawn into the game. The game can sometimes come across as an odd blend of painstaking detail and occasional





carelessness, lending everything a slightly schizophrenic air. It doesn't quite give the impression of quality and confidence in the product so prominent in something like, say, *Sim City*.

This is starting to come over as slightly negative though, and it's not meant to at all. If you can stick with *Hill Street Blues* for a while, you find yourself drawn in by the atmosphere of it. The fact that the game opens with high-quality digitised pictures of the whole TV team makes it easy to identify with your characters and

Capt. Furillo's office, from where you can check on the status of your officers, alter patrol routes, examine the crime files and see how things are going generally.

care about what happens to them. It's worth putting in a good word for the music at the start too, so here's a good word for it: really nice. Oops, that's two words. Never mind, it saves me having to think of a word for the sound, which would be tricky, as there isn't any. Well, that's not strictly true, but effects are so few and far between (the odd toot of a horn, or the slamming of a car door) that they're hardly worth the mention.

The most impressive thing about *Hill Street Blues*, though, has to be the attention to detail. Favourite bits include the way that every time you shoot a criminal you have to call in a coroner to cart the body away, the citizens getting stroppy about the streets being littered with smelly corpses, and so on. Also, if you let a perp escape, the likelihood of him committing another crime is increased, and continues to increase the more he gets away with. Even the time of day is simulated, with everything getting darker and street lights coming on as the day turns into night.

ONE FOR HILL STREET GROUPIES

For all the nice touches though, the game is the important thing, and eventually things do get a touch samey – possibly a limitation of the police-work format. Still if you're a fan of the show you'll probably jump at the chance to step into your heroes' shoes, and the similarity to the TV storylines will actually be a good thing. Krisalis certainly have to be congratulated on taking a brave, unusual and true-to-the-spirit-of-the-source-material approach to producing a TV licence – far rather this than another horizontally scrolling blaster, *Operation Wolf* clone or whatever. This isn't a bad effort at all, and it has an advantage over games like *Sim City* and *Railroad Tycoon* in that everything happens on a much more personal level, so it's easier to get involved. I don't think it's quite zippy enough to appeal across the range of every sort of game player (like *Sim City* did) though, as the initial mass of icons is just a little too off-putting for all but the dedicated god sim fan.

Hill Street Blues is a Jekyll and Hyde kind of a game. On the one hand it's well thought-out and friendly, on the other it's demanding and sloppy, and it might well be the case that for many people the bad points outweigh the good ones. Then again, the kind of people who habitually buy this type of thing (to generalise things) don't tend to be all that pernickety about programming finesse, and for them it could be more than acceptable. If you're one of those people, this could be for you. • *STUART CAMPBELL*

ON THE HILL STREET BEAT

All your favourite characters (and probably quite a few of the ones you hate too) from the TV show appear in the game. They're introduced by way of these rather pretty pictures plucked from the (ahem) 'atmospheric' intro sequence.

Programmers lurking in the background horror!

Hard-woman Bates is Coffey's patrol partner.

Undercover cop Belker growls and bites people.

Narcotics cop and serious hard-case.

Coffey's the street's resident Italian stallion.

Furillo's girlie and local District Attorney.

Hurrah! The father-figure of the whole street team.

Part cop, part bleeding-heart liberal wimp.

Bobby Hill partners the rather different Renko...

Hunter's the SWAT chief and part-time fascist.

Renko's a redneck who's not very good with girls.

Famous for chewing matchsticks and, erm...

Blues triumphs in two important areas – it's true to its source, and it's actually a good game.

UPPERS Very strong in atmosphere; impressively true to the spirit of the source material too. An excellent, and imaginative approach to an intriguing licence.

DOWNERS Slow and complicated – it can take an age to get into. Not really very exciting.

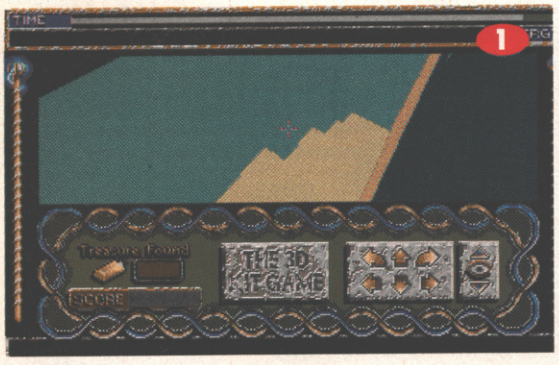
THE BOTTOM LINE

Something of a minority interest, perhaps, but rather well done all the same (and a laudably different approach to a licence). If you fancy a policeman's *Populous*, try this on for size.

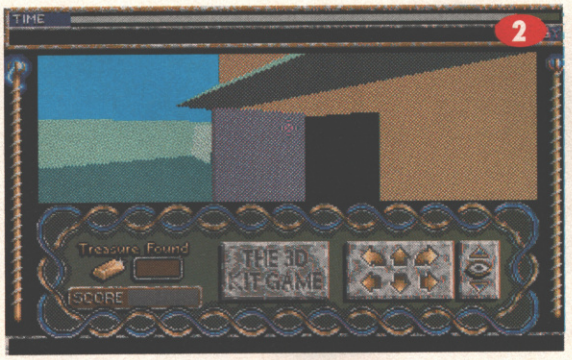
70 PERCENT

A STROLL THROUGH THE LAND OF FREESCAPE

If the whole *Construction Kit* caboodle is just a little too daunting for you, you'd be best off starting out by playing the game included in the package. Created with the *Construction Kit*, it's surprisingly similar to the 'real' Freescape games released by Incentive, such as *Driller*, *Castle Master* and *Total Eclipse*. Here's what you can expect to see in this minor Freescape adventure...



If you climb the stairs of the house in the first location and then use those arrow icons to take a look downwards, here's what you'll see. Don't get vertigo now, will you?



There wasn't an entrance in the building's roof (well, that's a surprise), so you'll have to come back down and open the front door. Now isn't that much more sensible?

And here we are inside the shop. What a strange-looking shopkeeper he (or she) is. And I don't seem to have any money to pay him with. There's only one thing for it. I'd better shoot him instead.

3D CONSTR

Yes, we know it's not really a game. But it's got a game in it, and it can be used to

These arrows move your viewpoint to above the current object, behind it, in front of it etc. Useful for moving around in a hurry. MODE decides whether you're walking or flying, and STEP chooses between fine movement and jerky movement.

And these ones are for moving around with, much as the player will in your completed game.

Here's the viewing window which displays the world as seen from your current position. You can then select objects for editing by clicking on them.

The menu bar at the top is how you access all *Construction Kit*'s main functions. There are loads of them.

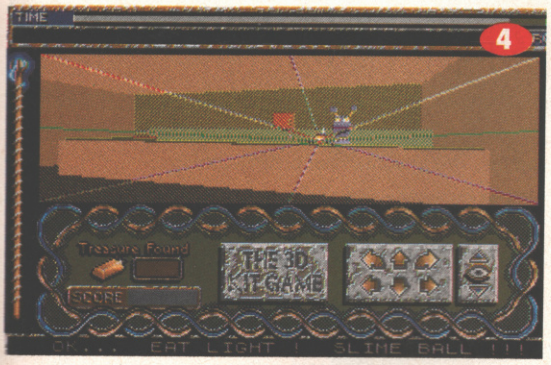
These roll you from side to side.

These are just a few numbers and things, showing which area we're in and our position (or that of the currently selected object).

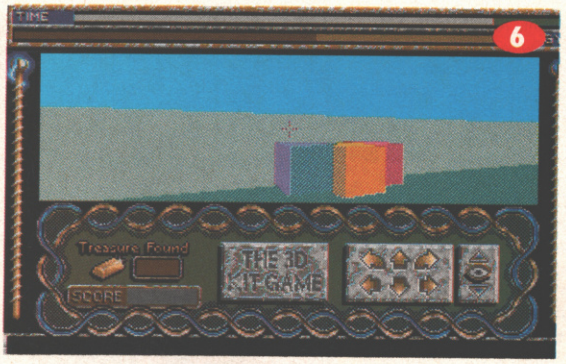
These are the Short Cut icons which save you rummaging about in the menus above. SELECT picks an object, COPY duplicates an object, CREATE makes a new object, EDIT changes an existing object, TEST jumps to a simulation of a complete game, with a control panel and everything, RESET sort of 'resets' everything to its position at the start of your game, CONDITION lets you attach a program to an object, ATTRIBUTES makes a list of numbers appear, all to do with an objects position and stuff, and COLOUR takes you to the painting bit.

The EXCL and HIGHL icons are used when editing to highlight the current object and make all others disappear to clarify things.

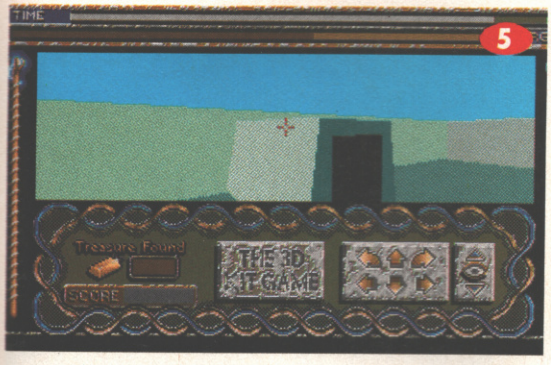
Here are the Look Up and Look Down icons. Oh, and the Centre one.



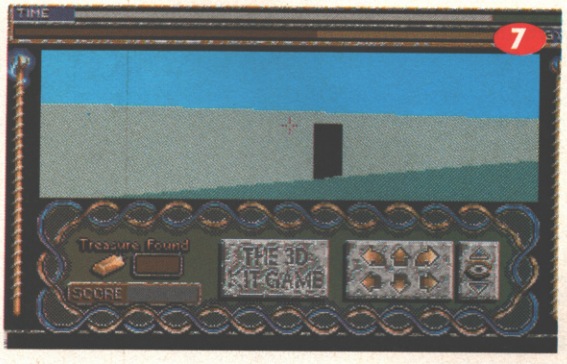
Aaaaaarrrgh! This is a retailer with a bad attitude. So much for customer service. I think the best course of action at this stage would probably be to beat an extremely hasty retreat.



Perhaps this could be something interesting. In the absence of any clever text parser, there's only one obvious course of action. Let's shoot it up a bit and see if we can't find out.



A-ha. Now this is a promising looking tunnel. I think I'll try exploring it. But wait! It seems I'm too big to fit in it. (Blimey.) Time for another rummage around for an exit. It's got to be somewhere around here.



I thought as much! Blasting away all the coloured blocks reveals this door here, which is your gateway to... Ah, but that would be telling. Play on and find out.

RUCTION KIT

d to create games without any programming knowledge. So we've reviewed it anyway.

Game: 3D Construction Kit
Publisher: Domark
Price: £49.99
Author: Incentive
Release: Out now

If you're acquainted with Incentive's series of 3D games, which started with *Driller*, *Total Eclipse* and *Castle Master* and shows no sign of coming to an end, you'll be familiar with their Freescape graphics system. Good, isn't it? And wouldn't it be nice if you could have a crack at designing your own Freescape games, but without having to worry about all the mechanics behind 3D filled polygons? Well now you can!

3D Construction Kit is basically the package Incentive used to churn out (if that's the right word) all the games listed above, with a few bells and whistles tacked on to turn it into a commercial product. (There's even a 'free' sample game in here so you can see roughly the sort of thing that you're aiming at). It contains everything you'll need to design 3D objects, colour them in, move them around a bit and eventually turn them into a fully playable game which can be severed from the main package and given/sold to whoever you like (as long as you give the *Kit* a mention in it somewhere). The only limit, as the free tutorial video stresses, is your imagination. (It also keeps going on about `a world inside your computer', and is best taped over as soon as possible).

After loading the software you're presented with a huge, empty box called an `area'. By clicking on the appropriate icons you'll be able to slowly fill it with buildings, furniture, baddies or whatever you fancy to create your 'world'. This is actually quite a laborious process – don't let any tutorial video tell you otherwise – but pretty soon you'll have quite a convincing landscape which you can explore to your heart's content. But that isn't the end of the story. You'll probably want to bung in a few more `areas'. Eh? Well, let's pretend that your first area (Area 1) contains a building. It's probably got a door on the front, hasn't it? The trouble is, when you walk into the door it makes a sort of `clunk' sound and you bounce off. You could always pretend that the door's locked or something, but your audience will expect more. So instead create a new, empty area (Area 2) and then attach a command to the door in Area 1 so that when you walk into it it'll whisk →

RAW BUILDING MATERIALS

Everything in *3D Construction Kit* is knocked up from a collection of basic building blocks. There are two 3D ones – the cube and the pyramid – and a selection of 2D ones which are mainly used for decoration (doors, windows and so on). Oh, and a 1D one – the line. The other two are group, which is a method for selecting more than one object at a time, and sensor, which can be used as a gun or a, um, sensor.

you to Area 2. You can then bung lots of furniture and stuff into Area 2 and turn it into a room – a hallway, say. And you can then have lots more areas leading off from it. You could also have spooky doors that take you into one room when you go through them in one direction, and a completely different room when you go back in the other direction. Or you could have a weird 'Tardis' effect where you go into a tiny building and inside are lots of huge rooms. We're getting back onto this 'only limit is your imagination' sort of business again.

Once you've set up your world you'll probably want to turn it into a game. Facilities are included to enable objects to be shot or collected. You can animate things so they move around. You can even add sound effects, timers, energy levels and scoring systems. The trouble is that to achieve all this you'll have to delve into the Freescape Command Language, which is a far cry from the cushy icons and things you'll have used up to now. A lot of work will have to be put in on this, and a bit of programming experience would help a great deal. It's very flexible, though, so once you've worked out what's going on it should theoretically be possible to program just about anything.

3D Construction Kit isn't perfect. The 3D graphics engine used to display everything isn't the most sophisticated system in the world – *Cybercon 3* would dip it in Flash and wipe the floor with it – so things can slow down a fair amount if there's a lot on-screen. We're talking about one frame per second for the 'house' detailed below. And the manual doesn't attempt to explain any of the terms it uses, so once again your imagination is called upon to do much of the work. Finally, and perhaps most ominously, there's the price. It's a lot to pay for anything, even something as complex as this, so you'll have to think pretty hard before reaching into your pocket.

These reservations aside, *3D Construction Kit* is a pretty potent piece of software. Anyone with a reasonably large brain should be able to construct a marketable game without too much trouble at all. People with slightly smaller brains will have plenty of fun constructing things and then exploring them. And people with really tiny brains could just sit and watch the video. There's something for everyone, really. If you're into it, it's an investment that'll really pay off in terms of enjoyment per pound, and which may even make you a bit of cash on the side. •

JONATHAN DAVIES

UPPERS Everything you need to build your own 3D game. If the finished product is crap, you've only got yourself to blame. A free game thrown in.

DOWNERS The manual is inadequate, especially at this price. And that's another thing...

THE BOTTOM LINE

If you're fed up with playing other people's games this could be the answer. It's not for the faint-hearted (or the faint-walleted) but it achieves what it sets out to do very well.

80 PERCENT

TECHIE CONSTRUCTION CORNER

While icons and coloured blocks are all very well, there's a darker side to the *Kit* – the Freescape Command Language, which is going to force you into doing some *real* programming...

This is what lets you add animation, sound, shooting, game beginnings and ends, entrances and exits and all manner of other bits and pieces to your creation, turning it from a mere 3D thingy into a complete game. It's a complete programming language, and that means dirtying your hands with a hideous array of technical, erm, technicalities. All very well of you've dabbled with Basic a bit before, but a whole new world for your average punter.

Each area (or room) and object in the game can have a 'program' assigned to it, and you can write a general program which is executed each frame. These programs can contain assignments, conditionals and loops. There are 256 variables available, 30 of which are used to hold things like the player's position, the area he's in and so on, and the rest are free to be mucked about with.

For example, you might attach the following program to an object so it disappears if it gets shot:

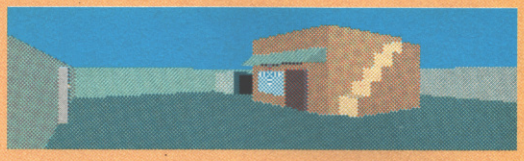
```
IF SHOT?
THEN INVIS (0)
ENDIF
```

Or this would move object number two across the screen a little bit:

```
INCLUDE (2)
LOOP (20)
MOVE (40,0,0)
AGAIN
```

As you may have gathered, getting a decent game on the road is going to be a nightmare.

Below: Unless you're completely crap (like me) you'll eventually be able to come up with corking objects like this.



CREATING YOURSELF A NICE HOME FROM HOME

So, um, there's a big empty space in front of you and a limitless supply of cubes and pyramids. But what are you going to construct? How about designing a house? Okay, let's take this one step at a time shall we? (It can't be too hard, after all).

Having acquired planning permission you'll need to concrete over a suitable area of turf to provide some sort of foundations. A large, grey two-dimensional rectangle should do the trick. It's been placed on the ground in the centre of the huge empty `room' that you start off with.

Next the walls go up. They're actually made up of two cubes, but the top and bottom have are `invisible' to save the program from re-drawing them (once the roof's GONE on you won't be able to see them). The exterior has been rendered in various shades to give an impression of light and shade.

The roof is created and lowered into place. Well, actually that's a bit of a lie. It's easier to place a pyramid on top of the walls and then stretch it into shape. The top's been painted red (as you can see) and the underneath's black so it looks like it's in shadow.

A door might be handy. Red, I think. What do you think of the little roofy bit just above it? It's a pyramid again, coloured to match the roof. I've also put in a prop to hold up the corner of the roof (it was looking a bit precarious) made out of a long, thin cube.

With the basic structure in place we can start on the luxury extras. A swimming pool is a bit of a `must', so we'll have one of those. It's a big, blue rectangle with a diving board made out of a couple of long, flat cubes.

Windows – one, two, three, four. And a few more. They're rectangles, of course, black on one side and `invisible' on the other. You could put in some sort of frame if you want, using lines, but I couldn't be bothered. The trick here is to do one window and then duplicate it lots of times.

The garden looked a bit bare, so I've planted a few trees. They've got long, thin, brown cubes as trunks with big green pyramids on top. Pretty convincing, eh? And, rather cunningly, I did one tree, created a `group' containing its two components and then duplicated that a few times instead of shifting bits around separately.

Time to add the finishing touches. A home's not a home without those little extra things. That's better. Having placed a gorgeous babe by the side of the pool the scene's complete. Better give Pickfords a ring. See – using *3D Construction Kit* is dead easy (ish).

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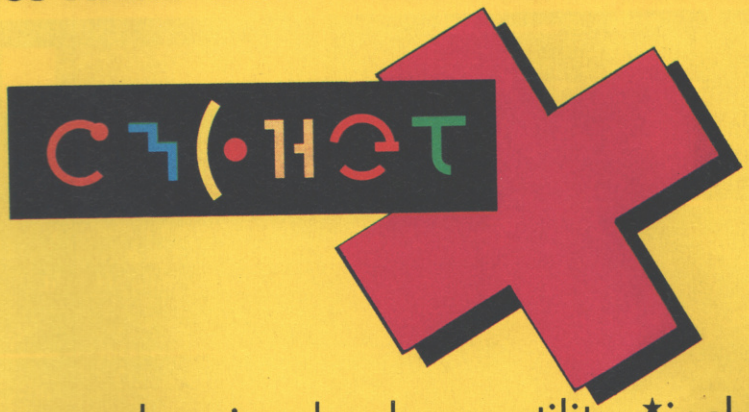

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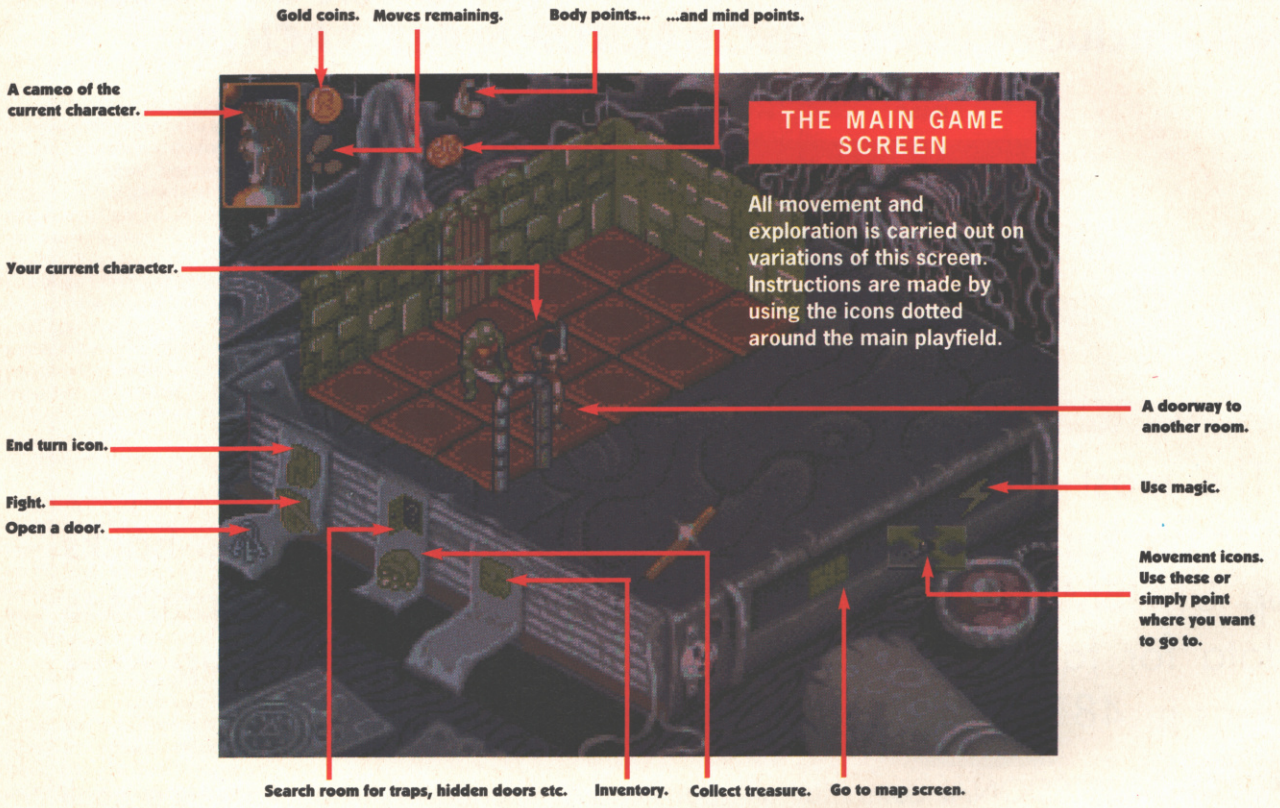
HERO QUEST

Hero Quest took the board-game market by storm, with its innovative mix of standard game techniques and role-playing. It was really only a matter of time before somebody



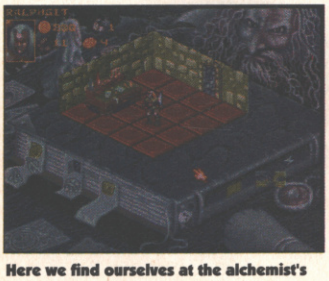
Game: Hero Quest
Publisher: Gremlin
Price: £25.99
Author: Michael Hart
Release: Out now

It's been a funny old month for me, y'know. All the games I was expecting to like have turned out to be complete guff, and things I thought I was going to hate have actually been loads of fun.

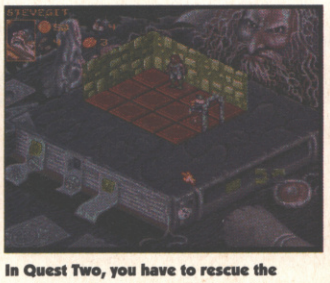
But I'm getting ahead of myself. *Hero Quest* is the official licence of the fantasy board game of the same name, and features up to four players playing against the computer in a number of quests (the number being fourteen, as it happens) of a fairly standard fantasy-game nature. There are knights to be rescued, goblins to be decapitated, secret passages to be discovered and treasure to be looted, and although the game can be played solo (in which mode it's more akin to a straight adventure), it's loads more fun if you get a few chums round and gang up on the monsters and race to be the first to the treasure. At least it probably is (not having any friends I wouldn't really know) but I'm sure it'd be just terrific. Sticking with the one-player game, then, *Hero Quest* on first impressions looks a lot like a cross between the Bitmap Brothers' *Cadaver* and the legendary 8-bit classic *Knight Lore*.

The various rooms and passages are illustrated in isometric 3D graphics, not quite up to the standards of *Cadaver*, but perfectly respectable all the same. That's more or less where the similarity ends, though, as in *Hero Quest* the gameplay is more reminiscent of *Dungeon Master*, with lots of exploring interlaced with bouts of hack-and-slashing. None of the monsters are especially tough, and a lot of the difficulty comes from the restraints placed upon your movements by the throw of the 'dice', and by the actual game rules. For example, you can't enter a room and then exit by the same door in the same turn, you can't move, perform another action and then move some more, and you can't search a room and attack a monster in the same turn either. This causes serious problems if, say, you search a room, walk into another room which turns out to contain four mean monsters, then find you're stuck there with no choice other than to let them all attack you until it's your go again (by which time there's a very good chance you'll be dead).

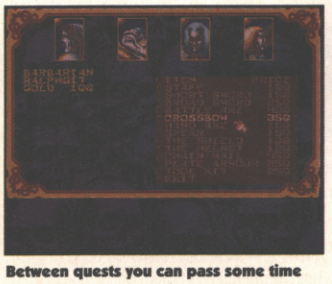
What this all means is that you have to plan your movements very carefully in order to have as many options open to you as possible in any given situation, especially when there are other human players involved, all trying to get to the same goodies as you are (I should imagine). It's not all just hacking and slashing though – certain characters have various magic spells at their disposal too, and there's the extra incentive that all the characters can spend any cash they get their grubby hands on during a quest in the weapons shop, which can be visited between levels. Even heroes have to go shopping.



Here we find ourselves at the alchemist's desk. Mmmm. I wonder what he's got hidden in his drawers?



In Quest Two, you have to rescue the captured Sir Ragnar. And here he is. (All you have to do now is get him out).



Between quests you can pass some time spending all your hard-earned treasure in the handy weapons shop.

The combat screen. The skull represents one of your attack dice, and means a successful hit.

LACKING A SENSE OF URGENCY

If there's a problem with *Hero Quest*, it's that the single-player game can be just a little bit dull. Since there's no element of race against other players, and no time limit, you can play the game very methodically and slowly, and so never have to put yourself in much real danger. A sense of urgency is always a good thing in a game, and unless you make things deliberately difficult for yourself (by rushing around the place utterly recklessly, for instance), that's something that's missing from one-player *Hero Quest*.

Playing jolly carefully then, I completed several of the more difficult quests on my first attempt, without having to be particularly clever, and this could result in the game having a rather limited span of appeal for many potential fans. That said, I didn't feel I was being cheated at all, as there's a sufficient random element in the fighting scenes that you can never be sure you're going to win. All the same, if you're always going to be playing alone, think carefully before you buy this game. Conversely of course, if you habitually get your chums round for an evening's Amiga-orientated fun, then *Hero Quest* is one of the most socially enriching experiences available. You'll certainly find out who your real friends are.

I didn't think this was going to be my kind of game, but for the nth time this month I've been proved wrong. *Hero Quest* is a very enjoyable piece of software indeed, and one of the best multi-player experiences available for the Amiga. If you fancy a different slant on your D&D for once, snap it up. • *STUART CAMPBELL*

UPPERS Very easy to play and extremely atmospheric. It follows the board game in that it will appeal to players of all ages.

DOWNERS One-player mode can be a little bit linear, and a touch easy too.

THE BOTTOM LINE

I don't know if it's any advance on the board game or not, but Amiga *Hero Quest* is a highly entertaining game in its own right, and especially good for multiple players. Go on, broaden your horizons.

80 PERCENT

SO YOU WANT TO BE A HERO?

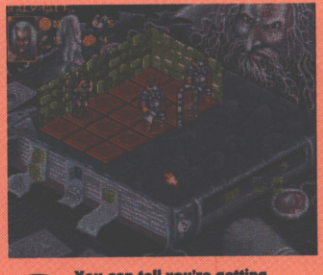
Watch in awe now, as we take you on a brief stroll through Quest Seven - The Stone Hunter. In this quest, the Emperor's personal wizard, Karlen, has disappeared. The Emperor fears that he has been murdered or succumbed to the lures of Chaos magic, so he dispatches our hero (ies you) to find out Karlen's fate, and if possible bring him back home to safety...

1 Here we are at the beginning of the quest. Actually, it's the beginning of all the quests, as every one appears to start in exactly the same room. Interesting features of this room include the baroque-feel imitation stone wall panelling, the floor, erm, the doorway, and ooh, lots of secret passageways and stuff like that, probably. Note the large stairway to your right, but don't be tempted to go down it, as I did on my first go, as it's actually the exit and your quest will be over before it actually starts. Instead, walk through the door, where you'll meet something very big, very bad and extremely scary indeed.

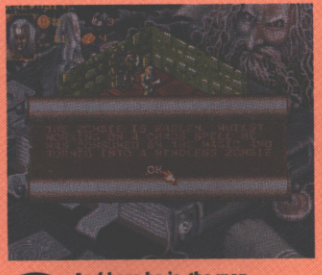
2 Uip. Actually, this little goblin is nothing for you to worry too much about. He's pretty much the sword-fodder character of the game, but he can be dangerous if your life-force is a bit low. Since you'll have to pass him again at the end of the quest, it's best to kill him now and avoid those unpleasant killed-on-the-second-to-last-screen scenarios. Generally, the scorched-earth policy is almost always the best one to follow when playing *Hero Quest*. It's always better to take out baddies near the beginning when you're stronger, than risk stumbling across them later when you're suffering from the cumulative effects of a dozen swordfights. At least this way, if you do get killed, you haven't wasted quite as much time.

3 Yikes! This is an even trickier situation than it first appears, as the game's combat system only allows you to attack one adversary per turn. The best plan, therefore, is to adopt a 'stick-and-move' policy, ie attack a baddie then run out of the room, where they won't follow you, before they can get any retaliation in. If this strikes you as a rather cowardly ploy, then make sure you attack the orc on the right first, as this will minimise the number of attacks you are subject to each move (characters cannot share a space, so the other two have to queue up if they want to hit you). If you use either of these strategies, you shouldn't have any problems with this screen, and will be in good shape to tackle...

4 These. Again, there are several tactics you can use here, although the one I've chosen (hiding in the corner and hoping they'll go away) isn't particularly advisable. The layout of this room means you're in danger of being surrounded and clobbered from all sides at once, so, in this case, discretion is the better part of valour. Put your head down and run through the room at full tilt and they won't get so much as a sniff of you (though sniffing you is the last thing on their minds anyway). Remember though, that they'll be waiting for you when you come back, so hold tight in the previous room until you throw a big enough number to get through in one go.



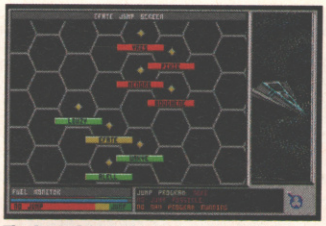
5 You can tell you're getting close to your objective now, as the opposition is beginning to take on more of an intimidating look. These two pleasant and charming chaps will do you some serious damage if you let them, so, er, don't let them. If you're playing as the wizard or elf characters, save your most devastating magic spells until now, or alternatively simply run for it again. If your character is strong, you could probably slug it out with them, but it's not really worth the risk. Again, if you do decide to just avoid them, remember to exercise extreme caution when re-entering the room on the way back.



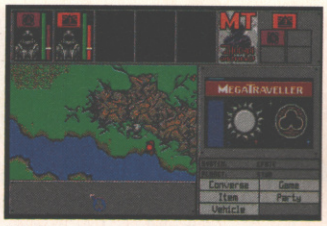
6 And here he is, the man himself, Karlen! Except, erm, he isn't actually a man anymore. Mucking around with magic, he got the recipe wrong and he's turned himself into a zombie. Despite being undead and comatose, he'll still give you a nasty bite if you give him a chance, so you'd better not give him any chances. And there's only one way to make sure you don't give a zombie any chances. What's that? That's right, we slice them into a dozen equal-sized pieces and go home. Give Karlen the chop and head back home, where the Emperor will pay you 100 gold coins for discovering Karlen's fate, and that's it. Quest Seven in the bag.

standard game techniques and role-playing. It was really only a matter of time before somebody realised it was a formula that'd work just perfectly in a computer game format...

Game: MegaTraveller 1
Publisher: Empire
Price: £30.64
Author: Steven Green
Release: Out now



The Inter-System Jump Screen, complete with obligatory silly planet names.



And here we see, erm, a rather inhospitable rock formation.

Boo! Hiss! Yes, you've got it, it's a fully paid up bad guy.

MEGATRA

The Dungeons & Dragons role-playing games have been converted to the Amiga countless times, but now the not-quite-as-famous

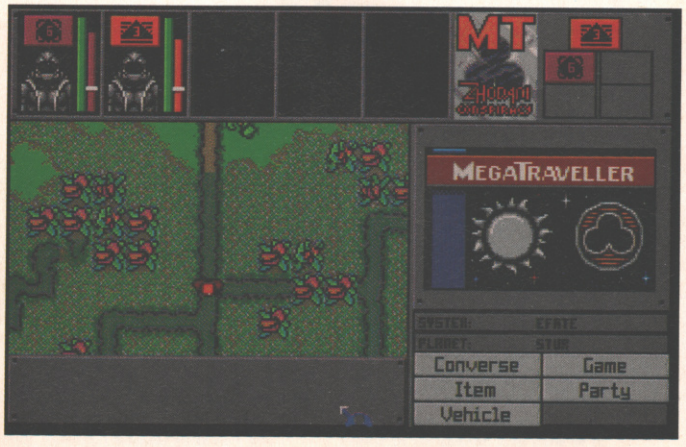
When the classic space trading and battle game *Elite* was released in 1984, it caused a considerable furore amongst fans of the fantasy role-playing game Traveller. Almost all of *Elite*'s strategy and trading elements, and indeed many of your spacecraft's add-on weapons, were, um, borrowed from the latter game, but Acornsoft (who originally released *Elite*) said it didn't matter because the two games were operating in completely different fields.

That's not much of a defense anymore though, as Marc Miller (the original designer of Traveller) has totally rewritten his original concept (hence the change of name), and revised it for computer conversion by Empire. *MegaTraveller 1* plays not unlike a cross between *Elite* (surprise!) and *Laser Squad*, with the space travel and trading elements of the former coupled with an overhead-view maze-cum-arcade-adventure-cum-wargame section every time you land on a planet.

You control a group of up to five characters, any of which can be taken from a preset library or created yourself, using a variety of recruiting and training options. A realistic touch is that if you choose to train your characters they get older as training progresses and start to suffer from the effects of old age. This can be fun, and allows for some neat little effects, but if you can't be bothered with all this the game has a get-started-quick option which drops you straight onto the first planet with a basic (but still fairly useful) team of characters who you can improve as the game goes on. Even if you manage to get a few of them killed, you can always recruit new characters at many of the more advanced spaceports contained in the game, tailoring your party to your preferred game strategy by selecting characters from any of five basic career types (Army, Navy, Marines, Scouts or Merchants).

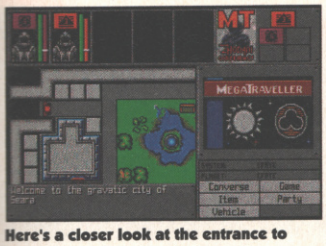
'Hang on', I hear you cry, 'what do you mean, 'preferred game strategy'?' Well, I was just coming to that. One of the very best things about *MegaTraveller 1* is the amount of freedom you have to conduct the game any way you like. You can recruit a gang of ex-Marines and make a living by blasting traders in space and pirating their cargos, or be a simple Merchant band and accumulate wealth by good honest bartering. Alternatively you can train a character in gambling and stack up a fortune in the casinos that litter many of the more advanced planets, or use Scouts to search for hidden treasures in some of the more out-of-the-way corners of the galaxy.

If you're smart, of course, you'll equip your party with a good mix of skills and be prepared for any eventuality. Even if you don't do that, you can still individually train →

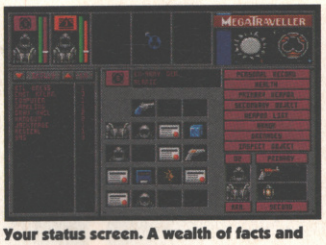


A gooey, slimy swamp. Watch out for the exploding flowers – they can be deadly!

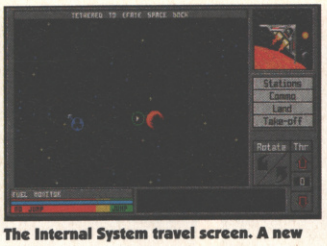
a fully



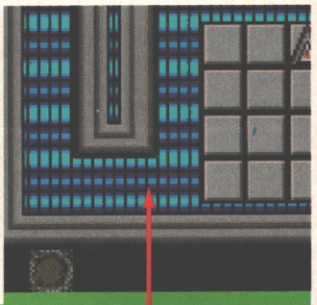
Here's a closer look at the entrance to that secret city on the first planet.



Your status screen. A wealth of facts and figures at the touch of a button.



The Internal System travel screen. A new planet is just a few moments away.



VELLER 1

The triangular arrow thing is actually an anti-grav vehicle.

PATHS. Travelling along these will give you an easier passage than trying to hack through the undergrowth.

And here's why it's essential to purchase an anti-grav vehicle – a secret walled city, which can only be reached by air. (I wonder what delights it contains?)

THE ARMOURY. Say goodbye to those shot-to-pieces blues, with some bullet proof kit.

THE VEHICLE HIRE SHOP. Give your legs a break by renting out a hydro-foil, ATV or grav vehicle.

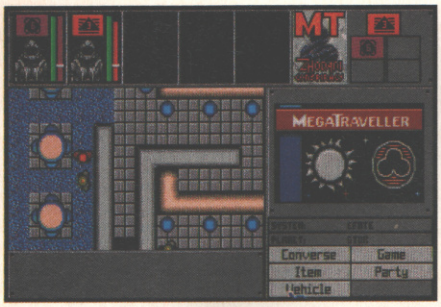
A GENERAL STORE. Ideal for, well, buying and selling lots of things.

THE HOSPITAL. Pop in here and your party will come out bright-eyed and bushy tailed. It'll cost you a few credits, but it's worth it.

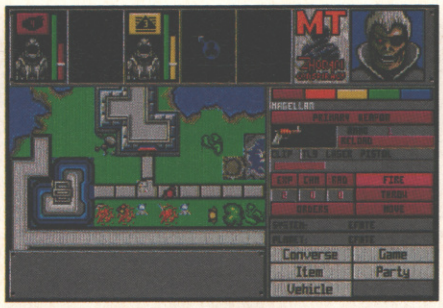
THE STARFARER'S HOME. You're unlikely to live long enough to retire here, but some of the inhabitants might be worth chatting to.

WAREHOUSE. Lots of interesting bits and pieces in here, including...ah, but that would be telling.

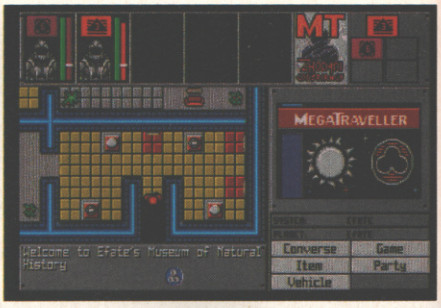
Traveller makes the transition (and manages to get even better in the process).



Inside a bar. (Where's the jukebox?) Just like in real life, a quick chat down at the pub can be very enlightening.



Don't try and fight it out at the start, or you'll end up in a bit of a mess (like these guys here).



Inside the museum. Can't see anything remotely valuable worth stealing here. I'll check out the casino instead.

characters in skills not related to their chosen profession, from a selection of dozens ranging from sub-machine gun use to carousing (Not sure what that is? Apparently 'the character is a sociable individual who enjoys meeting and mingling with strangers in unfamiliar surroundings'). Both of these skills can come in handy in crowded bars...

In addition to your chosen manner of keeping the wolf from the door, you can earn extra money by performing certain tasks which will be given to you by characters you meet in some of the various on-planet establishments. Scattered through the game are various shifty chappies who'll offer to buy illegal (or illegally-obtained) goods from you, or pay you for running errands for them. You can use this cash to buy various artefacts, services and armaments from shops and spaceports, or if you prefer you can simply shoot passers-by in the street and loot their bodies. Beware of this tactic on planets with a high law rating though (all planets have their own characteristics, from technological advancement ratings to environmental conditions to government structure), as you may find yourself the target of the heavily-armed police departments, who shoot first and don't bother asking questions afterwards (because their targets are invariably lying in a smoking heap of charred flesh and melted spacesuit, of course).

But wait. I could fill a magazine with background and details from this game, and it still wouldn't tell you if it was any good or not. I guess it's time I got down to some serious analysis, and answered a few of the questions I've most frequently been asked about it myself.

Question 1. 'Does it actually feel like *Elite* at all?'

Well, in many ways it does, but here there's much more emphasis on the mechanics of trading. It's got, ooh, I dunno, five times as much depth as *Elite* ever had.

Question 2. 'Isn't it likely to be really slow and dull and untidily programmed, as is usually the case with this kind of thing?'

No, not at all. It's as fast as it ever has to be, with the possible exception of the long disk-accessing pause when you take off or land at a spaceport. Presentation has had a lot of thought put into it too – it's impossible to lose yourself in nested menus as so often happens with these games.

Question 3. 'Yes, but just how deep is it?'

Well, if you took the Pacific Ocean, stacked another Pacific Ocean on top of it, and then attached two more Pacific Oceans to either end, it wouldn't be quite as deep as *MegaTraveller 1*.

Question 4. 'Is it completely and totally fantastic?'

Yes. *MegaTraveller 1* is involving, playable, superbly-designed, and one of the most atmospheric games I've played, ever. It balances realism with gameplay, and is extremely user-friendly (now there's a phrase I haven't heard in a while) in operation.

For example, at any stage of the game pressing the right mouse button returns you immediately to the previous menu, which in a game with as many options as this can be an invaluable aid to keeping track of what you're doing. Generally the user interface is practically invisible, which is exactly how it should be.

One of my characters (my favourite, actually). Ahem.

So where does that leave us? Well, with a game that really encourages you to play it. The attention to detail is almost breathtaking, and if there's been a game with more to do in it than this one, I haven't seen it. For once, content hasn't been at the expense of professional programming – *MegaTraveller 1* is beautifully put together, and free of the kind of irritating bugs that hampered, say, *Railroad Tycoon*. This game is to *Elite* what Madonna is to Kylie Minogue. • *STUART CAMPBELL*

UPPERS Huge depth, but incredibly accessible for a game of this type. A lot more playable than I expected it to be, and only as complicated as you want it.

DOWNERS The very long wait whenever you go into space from a planet surface (or vice versa) is a bit of a pain. Luckily it doesn't crop up all that often.

THE BOTTOM LINE

An absolutely superb game that'll make the hours disappear as if they were seconds every time you load up and play it. Even zap-crazed maniacs should give it a try.

88 PERCENT

SOME CHARACTERS IN MEGATRAVELLER 1

There are dozens of non-player characters scattered throughout the numerous worlds of *MegaTraveller 1*. Here are just a few of the ones you're likely to bump into early on.

Hold it. Say cheese!

Bet he eats at Squid-U-Like.

Darth Vader here will purchase any reptilian hides you might acquire during your travels, straight cash, no questions asked, under the counter, know what I mean?

A pleasant and charming individual who'll be delighted to sell you enough ex-military surplus hardware to decimate, ooh, at least a couple of fairly major civilisations.

Beauty and the Beast?

Bat-woman? (Surely not).

Kenny Rogers couldn't hold a candle to this lad as a hard-nosed, hard-drinking gambling man, so don't venture into his den of vice unless you're a well practiced bandit of the one-armed variety.

This criminal-looking geezer will rent you various vehicles to help you reach those hard-to-get-to little places. Try not to smash them up too much though, or he'll take it out of your hide (ie your leather wallet)

Now here's a friendly chap. Anything you could want for a happy and fulfilling day-to-day existence he'll gladly give you, and all he asks in return is a little bit of hard currency. What a lovely person. Er, being.

This attractive specimen is on the lookout for some coynes, and he doesn't care what they fell off the back of. You won't get the market price from him though, so if you came by any legally, steer clear.

Eat my shorts if we're not giving away this radical SiMPSoNS PiNBALL!!

Well here it is the biggest pinball sensation in years - The Simpsons! And you can get this machine which is worth £2500 into your bedroom, if you're the winner of our crazy competition!! We've colllected loads of silly sound effects from around the world, and to stand a chance of winning all you have to do is correctly identify them! So don't have a cow, have a go now!! Just...

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FORGOTTEN WORLDS

US Gold

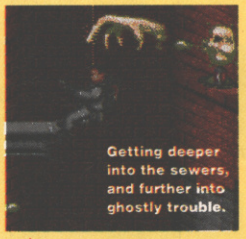
When the title sequence appears type ARC then press the 'HELP' key. Play will now begin so get ready to press the 'S' key to access the shop (note that this only works once per level) or the 'N' key to skip to the next level. Oh yes – both players will be invulnerable too.

Taking on the bad guys, and the control system, *in Forgotten Worlds*.

GHOSTBUSTERS II

Activision

When the Activision logo is displayed as part of the attract sequence hold down the 'ALT', 'CTRL', 'S' and 'U' keys together then press the joystick firebutton to begin. Now when you play the going should be a little easier – for example, the cable will be indestructible on the first level. Also, pressing the 'F1' key takes you to the next level.



DYNAMITE DUX

Activision

On the title screen type CHEAT. Begin play and press a key from '1' to '6' to access the respective level.

On the title screen type NUDE. Press fire to begin play but watch the alternative attract sequence.

Our intrepid duck fights more wackiness, this time in the form of moose-heads (real ones, not the beer).

COMPLETE CONTROL

Tired of tips that don't work or aren't even for the Amiga in the first place? Then you need...

POWER TIPS: straight from the horse's mouth and Power-tested for quality. Yes, not only have these cheats come directly from the authors – every single one has been tried and tested to ensure that no time is lost when it comes to saving your time. Starting on page 50 – the final part of our complete guide to the stunning *Rainbow Islands*, brought to you by Gary Penn.

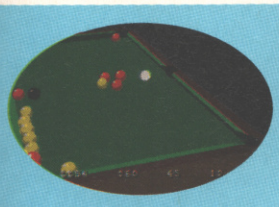
SKIDZ

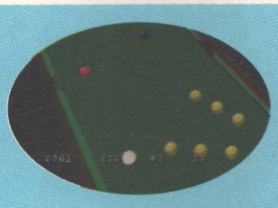
Gremlin

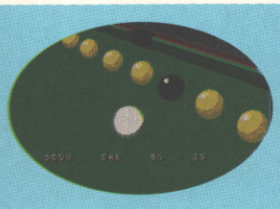
During play hold down the joystick firebutton and press the 'ALT' key. Now, still holding down the firebutton and 'ALT' key, hold down the 'C' key for unlimited quantities of everything ('CHEAT MODE ON' should flash on the screen). Or, you could hold down the 'L' key to play any level ('ANY LEVEL' should flash on the screen). Repeat this process with the 'C' key turns off the cheat mode, accompanied by the message 'CHEAT MODE OFF'.

Check out the threads on that dude. Nice shades too.

Clearing trash the *Skidz* way.







From left to right, trick shots 1 to 3. Now you know why we're giving you the solutions!

3D POOL

Firebird

The only way to perfect your general play is through practice. This isn't the case however with the 20 trick shots. You could employ a little trial and error to 'solve' them, but better still you could take advantage of the numbers shown at the bottom of the screen for reference. The idea is that once a shot is completed you simply jot down the numbers so you can set up the situation again with ease.

Provided here are the coordinates – the 'solutions' if you will – of the 20 trick shots. One further piece of advice: set up each shot using the icons at the top of the screen as they allow a greater level of accuracy than actually moving the table. If the shot is successful and you wish to replay it but from a different angle, use the EDIT SHOT facility.

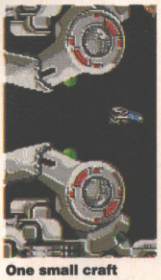
SHOT ONE 0768 024 63 10	SHOT EIGHT 0771 099 56 12	SHOT 15 0084 076 12 00
SHOT TWO 1002 041 63 09	SHOT NINE 0932 024 63 11	SHOT 16 0880 048 39 20
SHOT THREE 0032 100 63 00	SHOT 10 0927 027 63 20	SHOT 17 0372 100 63 06
SHOT FOUR 0962 024 63 00	SHOT 11 0751 100 16 20	SHOT 18 0512 100 63 10
SHOT FIVE 0512 024 63 10	SHOT 12 0916 025 55 10	SHOT 19 0601 024 63 20
SHOT SIX 0405 060 63 20	SHOT 13 0004 054 58 20	SHOT 20 There is no solution. This one is for you to define as you see fit.
SHOT SEVEN 0018 061 63 20	SHOT 14 0864 100 63 10	

The first four numbers represent the table's orientation (0000-1023). The following three figures show the table's tilt (024-100), while the next two numbers are the strength of the shot (00-63) and the last two are the amount of right-hand spin (00-20).

R-TYPE

Activision

Enter SUMITA. (including the full stop) instead of your name in the high score table. When you next play the word FREEPLAY on the title screen should be replaced by TRAINER. You now have an unlimited number of lives to play with.



One small craft against incredible odds, yes it's *R-Type*.

Continued on page 60

TAKE CONTROL OF RAINBOW ISLANDS

Welcome to Part Two of the biggest damn guide to a single game you ever did see. The game? *Rainbow Islands*, of course – not only Number One in our choice of All-Time Top 100 games, but quite simply one of the cleverest, most intricate and most complete Amiga games ever seen. Gary Penn knows more about it than any sane man should, so let him be your guide through the Features, the Specials and the last four levels. Sitting comfortably? Then we'll begin...

FEATURES

Every third creature killed, regardless of the method used, leaves behind not a Bonus Object nor a Gem but a Feature which stays on screen for five seconds before disappearing. There are seven features in all and the sequence in which they appear is shown here. With the first four features collected Bubby is at full power. This involves killing only 12 creatures so recovering from death is swift.

MAGIC SHOE
POINTS: 100
EFFECT: Helps Bubby and Bobby to walk faster.

RED POT
POINTS: 100
EFFECT: The first one increases the power of the Rainbow Magic so that the Magic Yellow Star produces two rainbows before exploding.

YELLOW POT
POINTS: 100
EFFECT: Increases the speed at which the Magic Rainbows are produced.

RED POT
POINTS: 100
EFFECT: The second increases the power of the Rainbow Magic so that the Magic Yellow Star produces a maximum of three rainbows before exploding. Once Bubby is in possession of this second Red Pot, don't bother collecting any others lying around.

YELLOW MAGIC STAR
POINTS: 100
EFFECT: Throws out an upward arc of seven yellow stars which knock out anything that they touch whereupon they will disappear.

CRYSTAL BALL
POINTS: 5,000
EFFECT: Breaks the Disguise Spell (see last month's 'ALTERED STATES').

RED MAGIC STAR
POINTS: 200
EFFECT: Throws out a circle of 16 red stars which knock out anything they touch whereupon they disappear.

SPECIALS

The eighth Feature left behind is in fact a Special (that's every 24th enemy killed), which disappears after five seconds. There's a total of 42 Special items, each one behaving in one of four ways – an immediate one-off effect, a delayed one-off effect, a temporary limited effect, or a temporary effect which lasts until the Round is over.

If a Special is picked up you won't get another one for that round, even if you do kill another 24 creatures. Nope, there's only one Special per level. The Specials are prioritised to determine the order in which they appear in the 'pipe' as it were. The sequence here shows the order.

The way it works is that Specials are earned. When Bubby performs the necessary task to earn a Special, the program which drives *Rainbow Islands* looks at the 'pipe'. If it's empty, the respective Special is put there ready for release when Bubby has killed enough creatures. If the pipe isn't empty, the item is replaced provided Bubby has earned a higher priority Special. The lower priorities Specials are often the best but are usually replaced because you performed some other task between performing the original, desired task and killing enough creatures to release the Special.

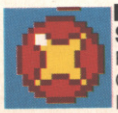
One of four Specials not implemented in this conversion – or, indeed, in the original arcade version – was the Drug Of Water. An educated guess is that it would have had some form of impressive *Bubble Bobble* type of effect.

CRYSTAL RING
POINTS: 1000
CAUSE: Collect three Red Pots.
EFFECT: Every step you take earns you 10 points, which is why the Crystal Ring is also known as the Stepping Ring. It lasts until the Round ends.

AMETHYST RING
POINTS: 1000
CAUSE: Collect three Yellow Pots.
EFFECT: The Jumping Ring, as this is also known, rewards you with 1000 every time you land. So get jumping. It lasts until the Round ends.

RUBY RING
POINTS: 1000
CAUSE: Collect three Magic Shoes.
EFFECT: The Rainbow Ring, as this is also known, rewards you with 1000 points for every rainbow created. It lasts until the Round ends.

RAINBOW NECKLACE
POINTS: 5,000
CAUSE: One Rainbow Necklace is provided for every 77 Rounds played. That's not to say you have to survive 77 Rounds on the trot – it works from game to game until you turn off.
EFFECT: The Rainbow Necklace is so called because it comprises seven little gems in the colours of the rainbow. And as we all know, collecting the seven different coloured gems in the correct order opens up the door to the secret room in the Boss Room. Collecting this necklace has the same effect.

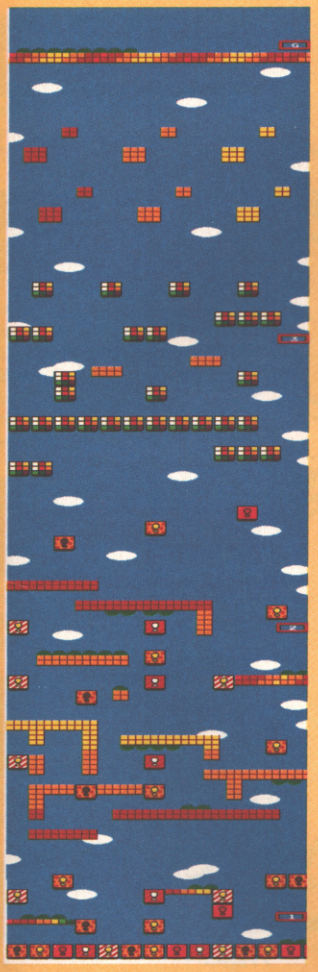


RAINBOW SPECIAL
POINTS: 10,000
CAUSE: One Rainbow Special is

TOY ISLAND

SECRET ROOM FEATURE

Book Of Wings: Permanent Flight.

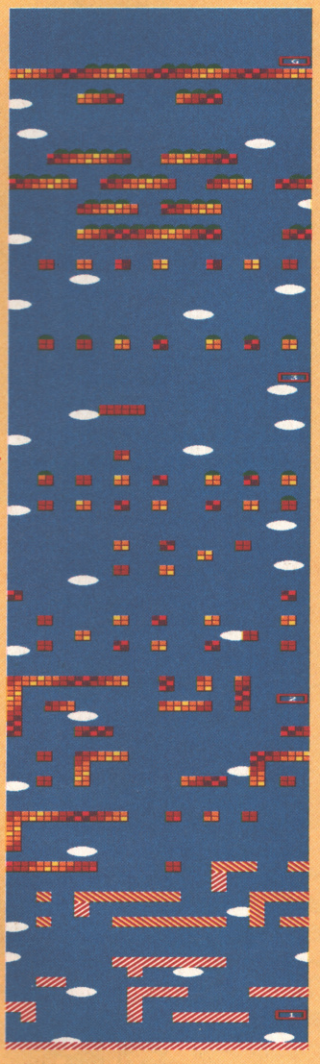


ROUND 13. 100 Seconds

BALL
Banebo
NOTES: There are actually two types. The Yellow Ball is stupid and turns orange when angry. The Orange Ball is more intelligent, re-evaluating Bubby's position every time it bounces, and turns red when angry.

PUNCH
Banebo
NOTES: If it isn't angry before Bubby gets on its level, it will be.

MAGIC HAND
Banebo
NOTES: It hangs from strings and bounces up and down – until Bubby gets close, whereupon its strings



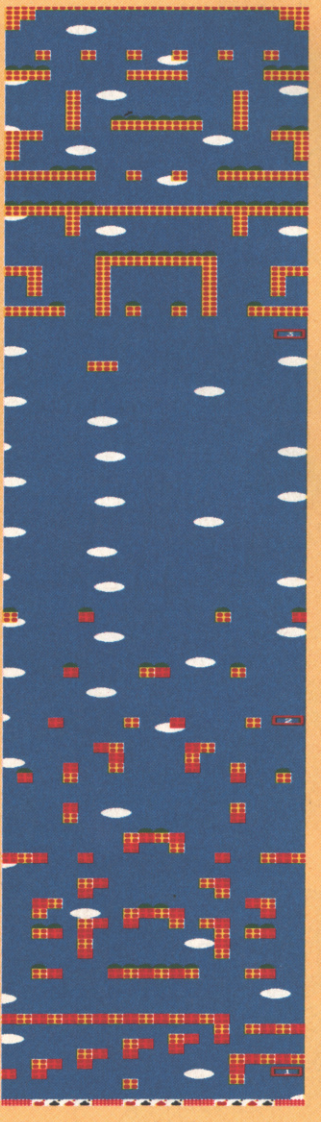
ROUND 14. 75 Seconds

vanish and it comes after you. At this point it behaves much like a Monster.

CLOWN
Monster
NOTES: Watch out – this funny creature tends to bounce up from below, often from below the bottom of the screen, which often takes Bubby by surprise. The Clown bounces around at a 45 degree angle.

WATER PISTOL
Hi De Gonsu
NOTES: It's very much like Werewolf.

OTHELLO
Invader

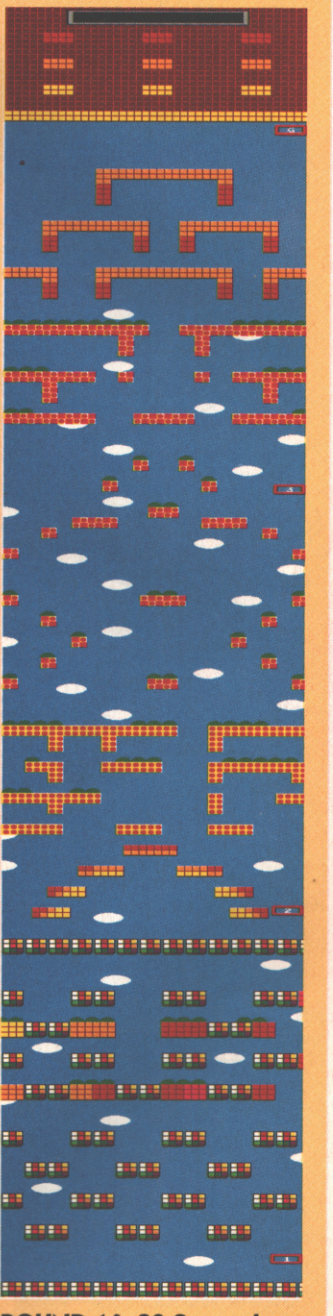


ROUND 15. 100 Seconds

NOTES: They often appear in pairs, bouncing off each other when they meet. In fact they are the only creatures that do this.

TOEHOLD
Zenchan
NOTES: It may be static but it's wide and usually placed in the most irritating of places.

BIG CLOWN BOSS
NOTES: He's quite easy to defeat really. He bounces around the screen



ROUND 16. 80 Seconds

at 45 degree angles and always has four small clowns in tow (they also bounce at 45 degree angles). If any of the small clowns are destroyed, the Big Clown makes some more. Simply walk across the bottom of the screen, firing repeatedly and avoiding the clowns as they bounce.

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provided for every 33 games played.
EFFECT: Wowza! The Rainbow Special makes the effects of many of the options permanent as they are collected, such as the Yellow and Red Pots, the Magic Shoes, the Guardian Angel, and the Wings.

RAINBOW PENTAGRAM
POINTS: ZERO
CAUSE: Achieve 30 'Completed', that's to say with the seven Gems collected (in any order).
EFFECT: An extra life is given.

HOLY COMET
POINTS: 10,000
CAUSE: Collect any two Crosses.
EFFECT: Random. It's based on the effect of a randomly selected item from the following choice... Green Tiara, Drug Of Rainbow, Clock, Rainbow Necklace, Rainbow Pentagram, Cross Of Rainbow, Cross Of Thunder, and the Red Lamp. How long the effect lasts depends on the choice.

CROSS OF RAINBOW
POINTS: 3,000
CAUSE: Collect any three Lamps.
EFFECT: Bubby can now fire a string comprising four fast rainbows – until the Round ends anyway.

CROSS OF THUNDER
POINTS: 3,000
CAUSE: Collect any two Rings.
EFFECT: Nine lightning blasts shoot from the sky and take out anything bad they hit.

DRUG OF RAINBOW
POINTS: 3,000
CAUSE: One is provided every 27 Rounds played.
EFFECT: Four colourful blobs orbit Bubby's head, knocking out anything unfriendly they touch, until the Round ends.

MAGIC CAPE
POINTS: 1,000
CAUSE: Bubby dies 10 times.
EFFECT: Bubby has invincibility until the Round ends.

HOLY CUP
POINTS: 500
CAUSE: Collect any 15 Pots.
EFFECT: Everything bad on screen is destroyed as if hit by a Magic Star.

PEACOCK FEATHER
POINTS: 400
CAUSE: One is provided after six 'Hurry!' messages.
EFFECT: A Guardian Angel, or Fairy, spins around Bubby 16 times – or until he crosses the Goal. She knocks out anything bad that she touches.

IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED – THERE'S ALWAYS CHEATING!

The original Taito coin-operated machine from which Graftgold produced this conversion is one of the few to feature cheat modes. It involves moving the joystick Left, Right or Up and pressing the Start and Jump buttons in special sequences to activate certain in-game functions. Graftgold's Andrew Braybrook ensured that they were implemented in the conversion, though they are not executed in the same way. Instead, the joystick movements and button presses have been replaced by their relevant initial letters. Simply tap out the codes on the keyboard while the *Rainbow Islands* title screen is displayed. If the cheat has been accepted, a large version of the relevant object will be shown on the credits screen.

BLRBJSBJ
Satisfies the greed of those with need for speed as it activates permanent Magic Shoes.

RJSBJSBR
The fun's twice as nice with permanent Double Rainbows.

SSSLLRRS
Activates permanent Fast Rainbows.

BJBJBJRS
Activate Hint A.

LJLSLBLS
Activate Hint B.

SJBLRJSR
Activate Hint C.

LBSJRLJL
Activate the Book Of Continues, which means you can continue after Doh Island.

RRLLBBJS
Now all Hidden Bonus Objects have become Money Bags.

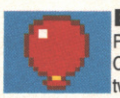
RRRRSBSJ
Wowza, this one activates BOTH of the above!

SRBJSLSB
Increases the score counter to a 100,000,000 points.

COPPER ROD
POINTS: 2,000
CAUSE: Collect six Copper Crowns.
EFFECT: 'Hint A' is given at the end of the Round.

SILVER ROD
POINTS: 2,000
CAUSE: Collect eight Silver Crowns.
EFFECT: 'Hint B' is given at the end of the Round.

GOLD ROD
POINTS: 2,000
CAUSE: Collect 10 Gold Crowns.
EFFECT: 'Hint C' is given at the end of the Round. However, because this relates to the later islands which weren't implemented, you won't actually see this.



BALLOON
POINTS: 1,000
CAUSE: Collect any two Rods.
EFFECT: Balloons rise up the screen for 16 seconds. Bubby can jump on them or shoot them for 10, 20, or 30 points depending on the balloon's colour. Note the way that the scores shoot off sideways because the balloons are moving upwards.

BOOK OF WINGS
POINTS: 4,000
CAUSE: Collect eight Magic Shoes.
EFFECT: Bubby sprouts a pair of wings will allow him to fly until the Round ends. It's just like jumping really, only you don't need any platforms.

CLOCK
POINTS: 3,000
CAUSE: Collect any three Tiaras.
EFFECT: The bad guys are stopped in their tracks for eight seconds.

BLUE TIARA
POINTS: 1,000
CAUSE: Use the rainbows to crush 120 creatures – don't hit them with the star.
EFFECT: Flashing stars rain down the screen, killing everything bad they touch, for eight seconds.

GREEN TIARA
POINTS: 2,000
CAUSE: Use the Guardian Angel to kill 20 creatures.
EFFECT: A Red Star burst occurs whenever rainbows are broken. This lasts for 16 rainbows.

RED TIARA
POINTS: 3,000
CAUSE: Hit 30 enemies with the Magic Yellow Star.
EFFECT: Every time Bubby jumps a Red Star burst occurs. This lasts for eight jumps.

BELL
POINTS: 2,000
CAUSE: One is provided every 20th Round.
EFFECT: The bell rings when Bubby walks over or stands on Hidden Bonus Objects. It stops when the Round is over.

STAR or MASTER ROD
POINTS: 4,000
CAUSE: Collect two Capes.
EFFECT: This is a special rod which makes all Hidden Bonus Objects appear as red stars which explode when touched.

RED LAMP
POINTS: 2,000
CAUSE: Collect 20 Red Stars (note that any form of Red Star explosion counts).
EFFECT: Five giant money bags worth 100,000 each drop from the sky.

YELLOW LAMP
POINTS: 2,000
CAUSE: Collect 10 Yellow Stars.
EFFECT: All Hidden Bonus Objects turn into money bags.

BLUE LAMP
POINTS: 2,000
CAUSE: Collect five Holy Cups.
EFFECT: All Hidden Bonus Objects which are money bags turn into gold crowns.

RED WAND
POINTS: 500
CAUSE: Collect seven Red Gems. EFFECT: When the rainbows are broken they crumble into Cherries. This happens nine times.

ORANGE WAND
POINTS: 500
CAUSE: Collect seven Orange Gems.
EFFECT: When the rainbows are broken they crumble into Tomatoes. This happens nine times.

YELLOW WAND
POINTS: 500
CAUSE: Collect seven Yellow Gems.
EFFECT: When the rainbows are broken they crumble into Apples. This happens nine times.

GREEN WAND
POINTS: 500
CAUSE: Collect seven Green Gems.
EFFECT: When the rainbows are ➔

broken they crumble into Bars Of Chocolate. This happens nine times.

BLUE WAND
POINTS: 500
CAUSE: Collect seven Blue Gems.
EFFECT: When the rainbows are broken they crumble into Eclairs. This happens nine times.

INDIGO WAND
POINTS: 500
CAUSE: Collect seven Indigo Gems.
EFFECT: When the rainbows are broken they crumble into Cakes. This happens nine times.

VIOLET WAND
POINTS: 500
CAUSE: Collect seven Violet Gems.
EFFECT: When the rainbows are broken they crumble into Pineapples. This happens nine times.

RED HOLY WATER
POINTS: 300
CAUSE: Collect two Red Wands.
EFFECT: At the end of the first three Rounds of an island, instead of 16 random fruit being thrown out of the chest, 16 small Bonus Objects of the same type (worth 500 points each) are thrown out along with one large like Bonus Object worth 100,000 points. In this case Turnips are used. The effect at the end of the fourth round of every island depends on whether you collected a full set of gems. If you did, then 16 little gems of the same colour (worth 500 points apiece) are thrown out of the chest along with one large gem (worth 100,000 points). Otherwise the effect is the same as it would be the previous three Rounds.

ORANGE HOLY WATER
POINTS: 300
CAUSE: Collect two Orange Wands.
EFFECT: The same as with the Red Holy Water only Peaches are used.

YELLOW HOLY WATER
POINTS: 300
CAUSE: Collect two Yellow Wands.
EFFECT: The same as with the Red Holy Water only Bananas are used.

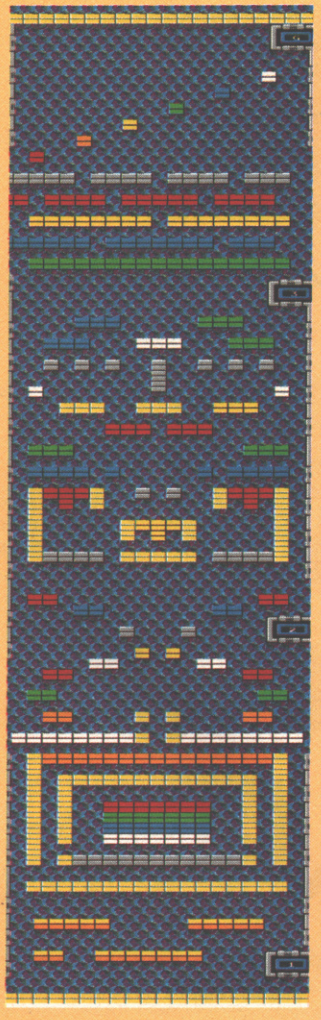
GREEN HOLY WATER
POINTS: 300
CAUSE: Collect two Green Wands.
EFFECT: The same as with the Red Holy Water only Green Grapes are used.

BLUE HOLY WATER
POINTS: 300
CAUSE: Collect two Blue Wands.
EFFECT: The same as with the Red Holy Water only Shortcake (Gateau) is used.

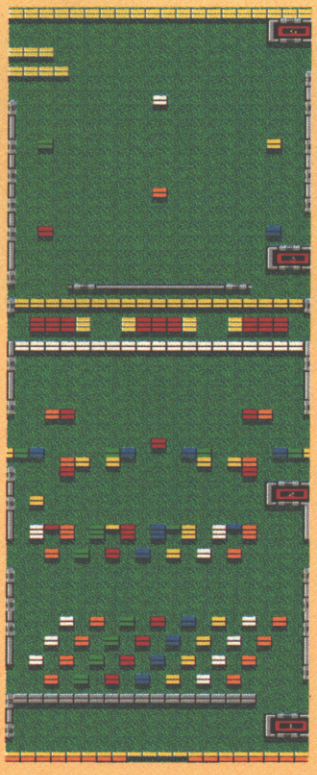
INDIGO HOLY WATER
POINTS: 300
CAUSE: Collect two Indigo Wands.
EFFECT: The same as with the Red Holy Water only Money Bags are used.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 57

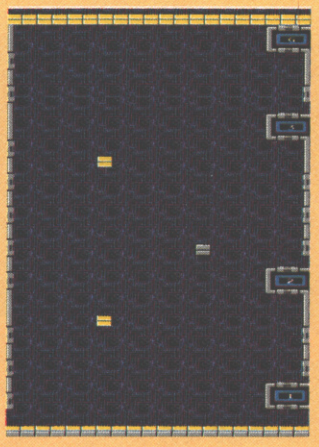
ARKANOID ISLAND



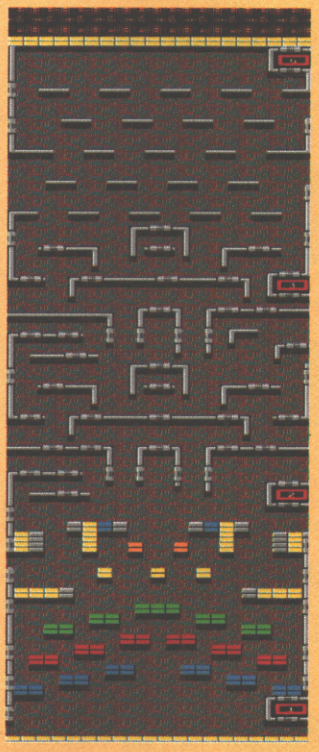
ROUND 17. 60 Seconds



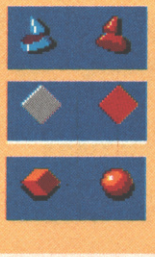
ROUND 18. 35 Seconds



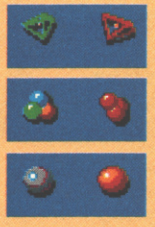
ROUND 19. 20 Seconds



ROUND 20. 23 Seconds



ALL LESSER MONSTERS
NOTES: These characters are taken straight from Taito's Arkanoid arcade game. They are all particularly nasty, especially the diamonds which have a tendency to fall from above.



DOH BOSS
NOTES: He doesn't move, instead preferring to spit out diamonds in Bubby's general direction. Try to stay beneath him, moving slowly but surely away from the diamonds as they are launched. When the danger has passed, get in there and let it have it.

SECRET ROOM FEATURE

Originally there were two doors – one leading to Dragon Island, the other to Magical Island. But of course Magical Island's not in this conversion, which is why instead you will find a Book Of Continues for Continue availability after this island. Using the warp means you miss out on the big bonus at the end.

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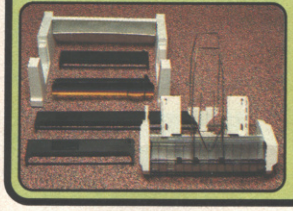

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PURPLE HOLY WATER
POINTS: 300
CAUSE: Collect two Purple Wands.
EFFECT: The same as with the Red Holy Water only Purple Grapes are used.

GRAFTGOLD KEY
POINTS: 10,000
CAUSE: Collect three Peacock Feathers.
EFFECT: It has two. First, a special parallax starfield appears in the background (but is only really visible on Monster Island). Secondly, a burst of 16 flashing stars orbit Bubby in much the same way as the Drug Of Rainbow. This particular effect lasts until the end of the Round.

THE ENDING

The original arcade machine actually has three endings. Since one ending requires Bubby or Bobby to complete the 10th island which this conversion lacks, there are two endings.

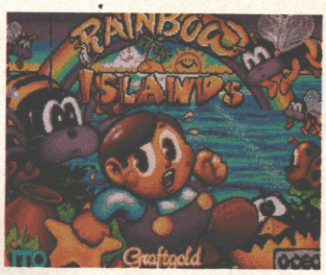
The first ending is achieved simply by finishing the seventh island without having collected all seven large gems. You are also told what to do to achieve the second ending...

Completing *Rainbow Islands* with all seven large gems earns you a 1,000,000 points bonus.

Regardless of how *Rainbow Islands* is completed, a 1,000,000 points bonus is given for each life remaining.

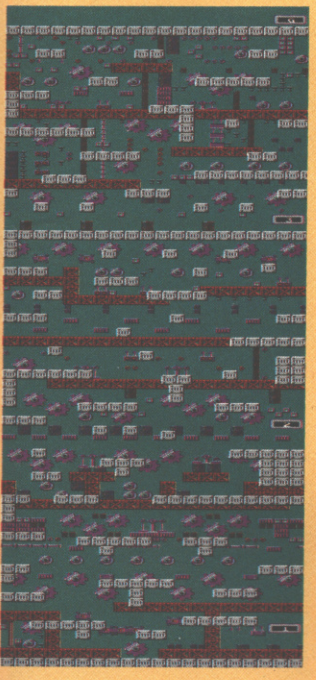
Additionally, a 50,000,000 points bonus is given for visiting all the Secret Rooms in a single game and without using a 'Continue'. If any 'Continue's are used, the bonus is 10,000,000 points.

The best score you can possibly hope to achieve is around the 63,000,000 points mark. ■



CONTINUED ON PAGE 58

ROBOT ISLAND



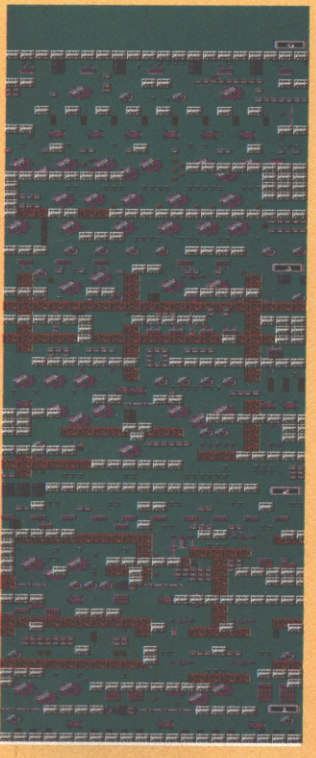
ROUND 21. 150 Seconds

PICK
Hi De Gonsu
NOTES: He's very much the same as the Werewolf.

PICKHEAD
Monster
NOTES: A fairly standard Monster type only it moves very fast.

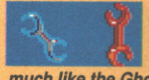
BOLT
Banebo

NUT
Monster
NOTES: It rolls along platforms, falling down when it reaches and gaps. As soon as it lands it rolls in Bubby's general direction. If



ROUND 22. 150 Seconds

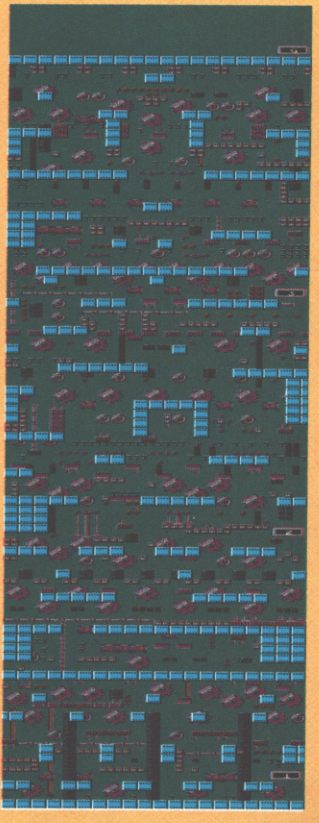
Bubby's above the Nut, when it hits the ground it flies up after him.



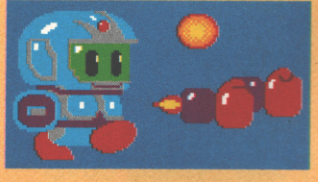
WRENCH
Monster
NOTES: It's very much like the Ghost but rather faster.

ROBOT
Maitta
NOTES: Like the Pick but far more aggressive as it fires far more frequently.

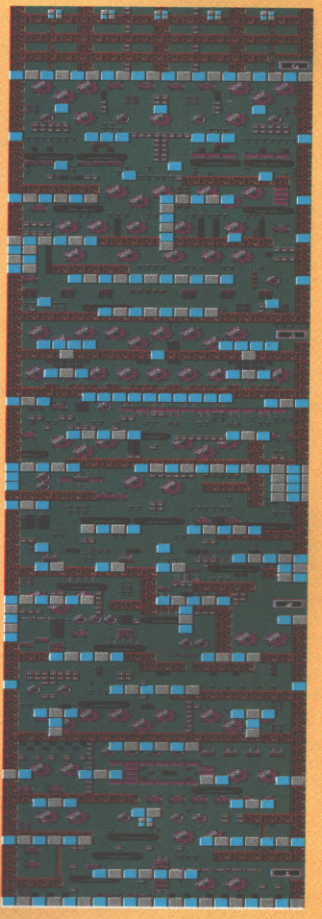
BIG ROBOT BOSS
NOTES: It's similar to Big Helicopter Boss only faster. It homes in on Bubby's height and fires not only four fireballs out of its head in a fan shape



ROUND 23. 100 Seconds



but also its fists horizontally in Bubby's direction. The Robot appears facing right, so as soon Bubby appears make a trap of rainbows to the right then jump on them and shoot the Robot in the back as it moves across the screen. Try to stay



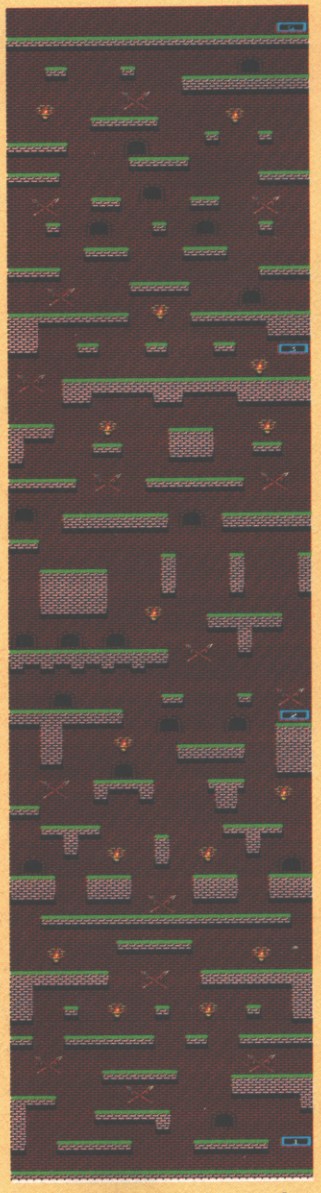
ROUND 24. 130 Seconds

behind it and lay traps which should be broken as it turns.

SECRET ROOM FEATURE

Special Peacock Feather: Permanent Guardian Angel, along with a Magic Coin which turns all the Hidden Bonus Objects into Money Bags.

DRAGON ISLAND

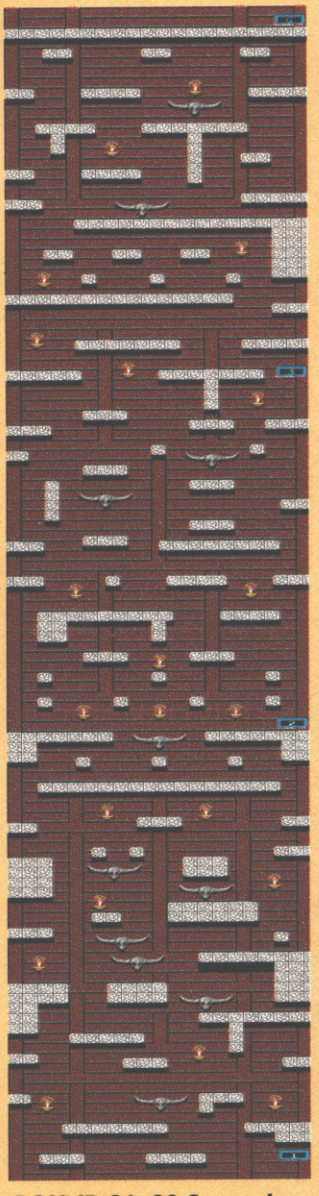


ROUND 25. 170 Seconds

PSYCROPUS
Maitta
NOTES: Like the Werewolf only it shoots black spiky balls.

SILVER KNIGHT
Banebo

GOLD KNIGHT
Hi De Gonsu
NOTES: Another Werewolf type, only this one's smarter. If Bubby is above it, it jumps to a higher platform to meet him. It also shoots a little flame.

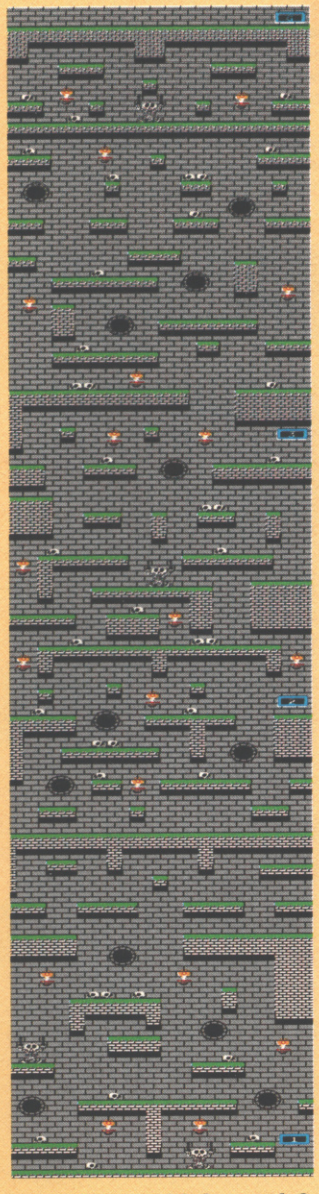


ROUND 26. 90 Seconds

DRAGON
Monster

GOVE-LDNITE
Banebo

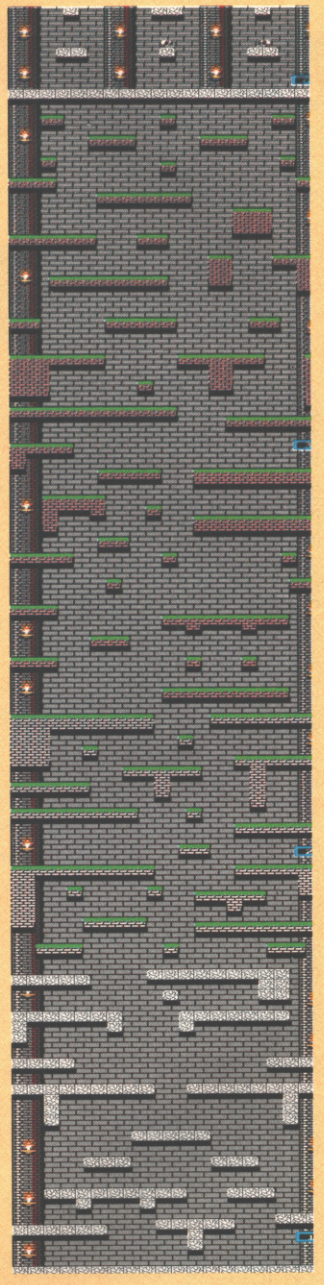
GHOST
Monster



ROUND 27. 100 Seconds8.

SLIME
Zenchan
NOTES: It's very much like the Nut, except it doesn't fly.

BIG DRAGON BOSS
It's pretty much like the Big Dracura Boss only it breathes fire, so the same sort of advice applies.



ROUND 28. 150 Seconds

SECRET ROOM FEATURE

Seven Big Money Bags worth 100,000 points each. These would normally be found in Bubble Island's Secret Room, but that's not in this conversion. At this point all bonus points are given and the score counter can now accommodate 100,000,000 points.

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BRAT

Image Works

Try entering these level codes at the options screen

LEVEL 1– BISHIGMO
LEVEL 2– MIHEMOTO
LEVEL 3– SASUTOZO
LEVEL 4– SUMATZEE
LEVEL 5– NOKITAGO
LEVEL 6– ITSANONO
LEVEL 7– MOZIMATO
LEVEL 8– HOZITOMO
LEVEL 9– MOKITEMO
LEVEL 10– ZUMOHATO
LEVEL 11– CHANASTU
LEVEL 12– NAGAITSU

LED STORM

US Gold

Begin play then type

AMIGADAVIDBROADHURSTWANTSTOCHEAT

Two messages will flash very briefly beneath the play area, one announcing that the cheat is active, the other saying 'Hello' to Karen and Chris. You now have an unlimited number of lives to play with.

The classic vertical scroller *LED Storm*, looking suspiciously like a Queen video.

WIZBALL

Ocean

Newly released on the Hit Squad label, it's a good time to give some handy hints. So here goes. Pause the action and type RAINBOWC. Play will begin again and the current cauldron will be full. Pause the action again and type RAINBOWS to complete the current level. Pause the action again and type RAINBOWT to complete the current level and finish the whole game!

Bouncing around in the grey world of Wizball. It's your task to bring colour back to this drab landscape...

...which is what the cauldrons along the bottom are for. Collect the colours, take 'em to the wizard, mix them and pow!

Here's a closer look at that status panel. In addition to the usual score stuff, your power ups are displayed. It is essential to collect these if you are to progress in the game.

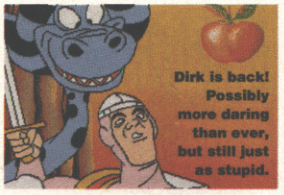
DRAGON'S LAIR

Readysoft

Begin play but don't do anything until Dirk walks over the bridge. When he does, hold down these keys simultaneously...

ESC L N R 7 /

The story will now unfold.



DRAGON'S LAIR II

Readysoft

On the title screen (where it says Timewarp), hit the RETURN key, and then type GET MORDROC DIRK (including spaces). Press fire to start, then the game will play right through by itself.

THE GEM'X CODES CALENDAR

Okay, all you lazy *Gem'X*-ers out there, here's all the level codes up to S (there are no codes for any levels after that). Simply type in the desired code on the title screen, and away you go.

B	EARTHIAN	TURRICAN	K
C	KENICHI	REDMOON	L
D	INOKUMA	CAMPAIGN	M
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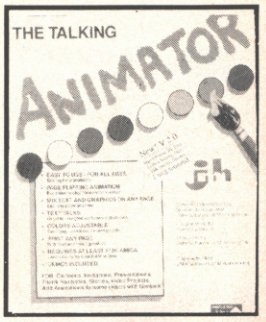

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ZANY GOLF
EA STAR PERFORMERS

Very limited availability on this one at the moment and for the foreseeable future (so if you see one snap it up!), *Zany Golf* is great fun, packed as it is with oodles of ridiculously designed holes. Especially fun when you're playing against a chum or too, but still absorbing as hell on your own. ★★★

ROCKET RANGER
MIRROR IMAGE

Cinemaware games tend to fall squarely into the love-'em-or-hate-'em category, and *RR* more than most. There's no denying the stunning 'interactive-movie' graphics, or the style with which the Nazis-in-space plot is developed, but equally it's hard to find an answer to the slow loading/insubstantial sub-games argument. Opinion is split in this office – Gary loves it, Stuart hates it, and the rest of us show differing degrees of grudging respect. Still, even the most dedicated of doubters would have to agree that this is a) one of the best of its type and b) worth a place in any collection. Indeed, at this low price there's a convincing argument to say that it's worth the dosh for the stunning visuals alone. ★★★ or ★★★★★

PROJECTYLE
EA STAR PERFORMERS

There are lots of Top 100 games available on budget, and here's another of them – an odd cross between air hockey, soccer and *Speedball 2*. Very, very fast, easy to get your mind around and stunning fun with more than one player (you can have up to three), it's a beautifully simple idea – which works! ★★★★

SUPER HANG ON
THE HIT SQUAD

An ancient driving game now perhaps, but ZZKJ's Super Hang On coin-op conversion has been rarely bettered. It's certainly ridiculously fast and comes complete with enough bends, twists and bumps to send your stomach flying all over the shop. Simple thrills, perfectly presented – a purchase you won't regret if ever there was one. ★★★★

SILKWORM
VIRGIN 16 BLITZ PLUS

SWIV (Storm's unofficial 'sort-of' follow up) may have recently driven home just what a limitation the unfair two-player option is to this game, but *Silkworm* remains easily one of the best horizontally scrolling blasters around. Ear-shattering explosions, some imaginative semi-organic looking enemy helicopters and (of course) lashings of mega-violence. ★★★★

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XENON 2
16 BLITZ PLUS

A totally different game to *Xenon* (well, they're both vertically scrolling shoot-'em-ups, so perhaps it's not totally different), this is a truly stunning audio/visual feast – still perhaps the game you'd show to friends to prove what your Amiga can do. The slightly annoying wait while the (gorgeous) shop sequence loads aside, this does what it sets out to do almost perfectly. A must buy. ★★★★★

XENON
16 BLITZ PLUS

This is the one where it all started – the metallic graphics, the sharp sound, the clever spicing up of an age-old game style and all the usual Bitmap tricks. It's a vertically scrolling shoot-'em-up, of course, blessed with a driving beat, some nice presentation and overall a very good 'feel'. The sometimes-you're-a-tank, sometimes-you're-a-plane aspect can get a bit wearing at times, but overall it's still a corker. The mag I worked on at the time called it 'the first home arcade game' or some-such, and (d'you know) they weren't that far wrong. ★★★★

BUGGY BOY
ENCORE

The graphics might look a bit on the primitive side these days (we prefer 'cartoony'), but *BB*, with its flag collecting, obstacle jumping action and fair old turn of speed remains a minor league classic. Having said that, if you're in the market for a cheapo driving game we'd go for *Super Hang On* (for sheer quickness) every time – or at least, we think we would. *Buggy Boy*'s sheer loveability does have a horrible tendency to tip the balance back in its favour. ★★★

3D POOL
MIRROR IMAGE

Just imagine you're playing a game of pool. Now imagine it on a computer. And, erm, here it is. (Okay – I'll write a bit more about it. It's got lovely sharp graphics, smooth animation, lots of computer opponents, oodles of options and the opportunity to view the action from just about any angle you like. It's a bit of a corker, all things considered.) ★★★

FLOOD
EA STAR PERFORMERS

Rather darker than the average cutsie platform game, *Flood* was the one that first showed Bullfrog couldn't just do epic strategy/God sim type games. (In fact, to date it's just about the only game to show etc etc). Featuring puzzles, passwords, the ability to cling to walls and an awful lot of water, it's a game that's not afraid to totally muck about with the traditional limitations of its type, and a true minor league classic to boot. ★★★★★

GAUNTLET II

KIXX

I remember playing this when it came out and loving it – there's a little four player joystick adaptor thingie you can get which makes it incredible fun with a handful of pals, all four of you running around, fighting over the limited supplies of collectable food and attempting to run off and leave one player behind. Lovely little sampled voices add to the atmosphere – it's one of the most social computer games going. ★★★★

POWERDROME

EA STAR PERFORMERS

An odd sort of filled vector graphics 3D air-racer thing, *Powerdrome* is very interesting (if perhaps a little bit flawed). Quite neat in principle, fast and packed with lots of options, but somehow the gameplay doesn't feel quite right. Still, well worth having all the same. ★★

IK+

THE HIT SQUAD

A bit dated looking now (partly because it's hard to take any single screen beat-'em-up seriously these days), but System 3's amusing two-player-plus-extra-computer-opponent romp still prompts a few smiles. Certainly, if you're in the market for a straight beat-'em-up, this is the one to get. ★★★★

CARRIER COMMAND

MIRROR IMAGE

One of our all time faves, *Carrier* has to be a first choice on any shopping list. Vast and packed full of things to fly and do and see, it trailblazed a tiny genre all of its own – the strategy/wargame/flight sim/shoot-'em-up 'thing'. Not quite as user friendly as it should be – the icon controls take some getting used to – but *Carrier* remains a stunning achievement. You may find it almost impossible to finish, but it's exactly the sort of game that'll encourage you to try anyway. ★★★★★

F/A-18 INTERCEPTOR

EA STAR PERFORMERS

Flight sims come and flight sims go, but Interceptor just sits there quite happily and smiles. If it doesn't quite see off all comers, it's at least the one they all compare themselves to – quite an achievement for a game this old. Lots of external-view camera options, some lovely fast 3D and a decent level of user-friendliness, plus a choice of two planes (you can play the F-16 Falcon too if you prefer) add up to quite some game – a fine sim for beginners and experts alike. ★★★★★

You can't ignore the fact that all of a sudden there's a lot of budget Amiga software about. An awful lot, in fact, including more than a smattering of bona fide classics. Just check out the games on this page – all were real ground breakers at the time, and indeed, many remain the best in their respective classes even now. There's nothing else fancy about this piece at all – just twenty or so essential Amiga games that you should be able to pick up for a song.

WHAT THOSE RATINGS MEAN: ★★★★★ Excellent ★★★★★ Nearly there ★★★★ Very good ★★★ Has its moments ★★ Flawed ★ Dire

ARKANOID 2

THE HIT SQUAD

Arguably inferior to (or at least no better than) the original *Arkanoid* conversion, *Arkanoid 2* is at least still available – you can't find the first game now for love nor money. You can't really go wrong with these bat-brick-and-ball things at the worst of times, and *Arky 2* takes the classic *Breakout* gameplay, adds some new twists (chiefly lots of new aliens), some snappy graphics, an easy to operate control (far better than the coin-op's paddle arrangement) and plenty of style. ★★★★

SPEEDBALL

MIRROR IMAGE

Simpler than the stunning *Speedball 2*, and operating on a smaller pitch, the original *Speedball* remains quite an incredible game in its own right. Drawing inspiration from American Football, Rollerball and countless mega-violent 2000AD strips, it rattles along at a fair old pace (real end-to-end action, this), echoing perhaps the feel of 5-a-side rather than the full-pitch effect of its big brother. Like most sports games it really steps into overdrive in the frantically fast two-player mode. Typically pretty metallic graphics add the icing to what has become a classic slice of Bitmappery. ★★★★

DRILLER

KIXX

Freescape – love it or loathe it, you'd be hard pushed to say you had a complete software collection if it didn't include at least one of these 'revolutionary' filled-3D graphics adventure game thingies in it. *Driller* was the original, features lots of puzzles, lots of zooming about the place and lots of, well, everything really. It's exciting too – or at least it is if you're the sort of person who gets heavily embroiled in this sort of stuff. It may have been done quite a lot better since – the recent(ish) *Castle Master* springs to mind immediately, of course – but *Driller* remains classic Freescape. There's ridiculously more than £7.99s worth of entertainment locked in here. ★★★

WORLD CLASS LEADERBOARD

KIXX

It might just have been roundly trounced by *PGA Golf Tour* (reviewed last issue) but *World Class Leaderboard* remains a stunningly playable golf sim. Once you've got the hang of the power and chip/slice controls playing it's a doddle – though it has to be said, doing well isn't. There's not that much you can say about it really – well, not without three pages to explain every last detail – except to say that it works exactly as you'd expect golf on a computer should. ★★★★

FORGOTTEN WORLDS

KIXX

Slightly tricky to control perhaps – your little flying men sort of rotate their guns around all angles which takes some getting used to – but a fast, stylish blast nonetheless, and the game that seemed to trigger a sort of renaissance in the standard of US Gold coin-op conversions. Slick atmospheric, post-apocalyptic fun. ★★★

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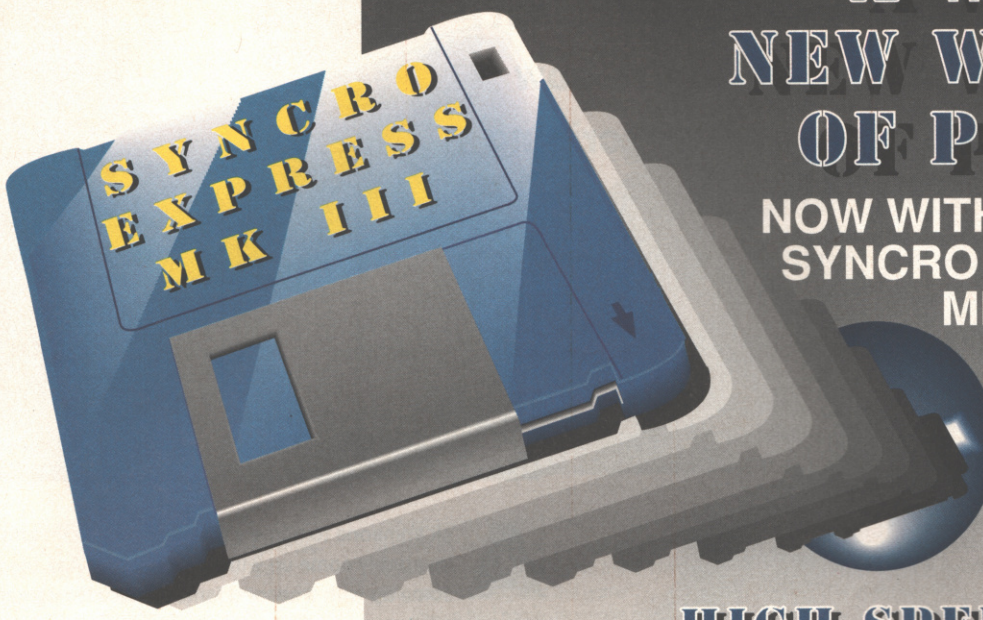

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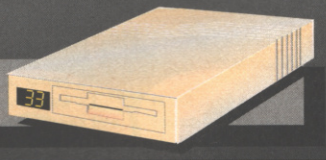

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SYNC III

'It's more of an action game!' Not what you'd expect, perhaps, but that's how Bullfrog's Peter Molyneux is describing *Populous II*. Strange things are coming to fruition down on Bullfrog's pad, as Matt Bielby discovers...

Glenn Corpes: *Populous II* and *Creation* programmer

Kevin Donkin: *Powermonger* WW1 disk programmer

Photography by Stuart Whale

POND LIFE

BULLFROG AND THE ART OF GREAT GAMES

Ask someone to name a programming team and they'll invariably come up with The Bitmaps. Ask them to come up with a second famous team though and the answers will vary a bit – some (those with long memories) may mention Jez San's Argonaut mob, others might plump for The Assembly Line or Core. Chances are though, most will pick out Bullfrog – they may not wear shades and stare meaningfully into the middle-distance, but they *have* developed a distinctive, recognisable style (this 3D isometric for-want-of-a-better-word 'God sim' stuff), they are consistently interesting in what they do and (most importantly) they did, after all, develop *Populous*.

Ah, *Populous*. Without doubt one of the most distinctive, original games ever seen on the Amiga (or indeed elsewhere), *Populous* has become something of an international phenomenon. It's sold a good 750,000 (750,000!!) units worldwide ('Guess how many different machines you can play it on now?' Peter Molyneux asks. 'Fifteen!'), and is still constantly referred to as 'One Of The Greatest Games Ever Written'. It's the sort of thing that becomes an obsessive experience with people. (Indeed, ask Peter what games he's been playing recently and he comes over all sheepish – 'I still play *Populous* quite a lot', he eventually admits).

Peter Molyneux – 'stubborn, eccentric, obsessive, imaginative' (his words, though we had to force them out of him) and 'someone who appreciates beauty.' Ahem.

Peter: *Populous II* project 'big cheese' | Sean Coope: *Bob* programmer | Gary Carr: *Populous II* graphic artist | Alex Trowers: Game tester/programmer | Phil Trelford: PC programmer

Here's another question for Peter Molyneux – how would you describe Bullfrog? After a bit of rigmarole ('I'll only answer that if you'll tell me how you'd describe yourself' etc) he eventually comes out with some variation on his 'slow, disorganised, but keen,' line. That being said, for a team of only seven or eight people they've got a lot of things on the boil. There's *Creation*, the genetic engineering-based project, there's the as-yet-not-properly-named '*Bob*' ('I think it has the potential to be the best thing Bullfrog has ever produced' he told us last issue), there's the *Powermonger* data disk, there's another, further away and more mysterious secret project and then, of course, there's *Populous II*.

'Of all the programs we've done, this is the one I really wanted to do,' says Peter. 'It's because I like playing *Populous* so much, but I keep seeing ways in which we should change it.' Certainly, if ever a program was 'long awaited,' this is it. In fact, it's the chance to see it at an early(ish) stage that gets me

'We don't want to be known just as the 3D isometric god-sim people'

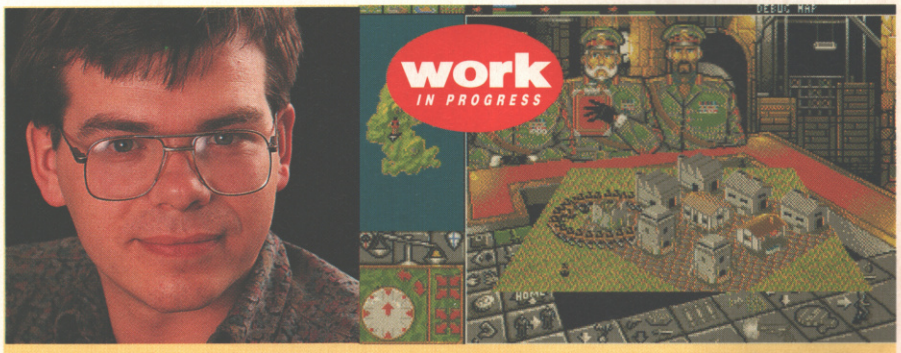
and photographer Stuart into a (painfully slow) Fiesta hire car with a boot-load of lighting equipment and an illegible set of instructions for a day-trip to Guildford. In particular, for a day trip to a typically programmer-chic (ie ratty and run down) series of offices above a hi-fi shop in the centre of town. 'It's a stupid place to be', says Peter, 'there's no need for us being in the city centre like this. It just sort of happened.'

Bullfrog's offices – the place is signposted 'Taurus', the name of the old business software company the outfit was born out of – occupy a number of floors build around a rickety staircase. The bulk of the programming seems to be done in the one at the top, a room shared with a tankful of baby Piranha fish ('we catch them tiddlers from the river to feed them on – the thing is, they'll only eat food that's moving') and a thankfully separate tank full of Oscars (another, wimpier sort of fish) which'll gladly gum your finger to death. So it's here, in these slightly unlikely surrounds, that great games are made, eh?

'Well, sort of. The easiest and the hardest part of it all is coming up with the Good Idea to start with. That can be done anywhere – usually we go down the pub, or for a meal, and just bounce ideas around until one sticks. In fact, I've got tapes of the original conversations we had about *Populous* – if you listen to them there'll be one point where you can say "Yes, there's where the idea came from. That was the moment we thought of the game".'

We've had some Japanese magazines in the office lately, I tell Peter. LOGiN's the famous one, but there are lots of others and they're all about 400 pages long and totally unintelligible – apart from the *Populous* ad with its little Bullfrog logo on the back cover, that is. When you think that all those people in Japan know who Bullfrog are, or certainly know your games, you get to a state where you're expecting something of a more, well, impressive operation than you've got here.

'Yes, I know what you mean,' he replies. 'We had a few journalists from LOGiN here the other day actually. I don't know what they expected, or what they thought of what they found. They took us outside and made us all climb up a tree to have our pictures taken. Not like you lot at all.' ➔



Kevin Donkin – *Powermonger WW1 disk* | This incarnation of *Powermonger* makes it look fresher than ever.

POWERMONGER DATA DISKS

Before we see *Populous II*, '*Bob*' et al we've this to come – the *Powermonger* data disks. As with the Bitmap's *Cadaver* disks this isn't just more of the same, but an improvement – it goes some way towards correcting things Bullfrog collectively see as being improvable about the original. Kevin Donkin, an original Bullfrog from way back, is the man responsible.

These graphics aren't quite finished, but they're going to be pretty evocative as you can see.

So Kevin, what are the differences – I mean aside from the big one. It's obvious you've switched time periods.

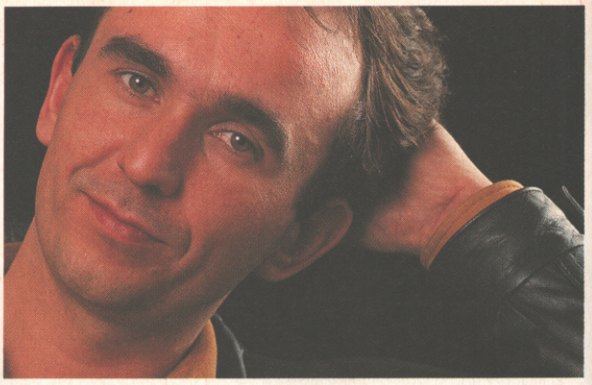
Yes, we're in World War 1 now – we're not all that involved with historical specifics, but that's the level of technology we're dealing with, and the map you operate on will be that of Europe.

Beyond that the big difference is that you play one individual now, not a group of generals, so there's no hesitation in your orders getting through at all. The graphics have changed too of course – we've got little biplanes buzzing overhead, WW1 tanks on the ground and so on.

It all looks pretty finished. What's your time scale to completion then?

Not long at all. It needs some of the graphics finishing, the maps putting in and the text changing to suit the new scenario, but beyond that it's done. It's just minor tweaking now.

Powermonger WW1 data disk will be released next month.



He's referring to the fact that Stuart's currently struggling up the narrow stairs with armfuls of lights and rolls of white paper to set up for our photo shoot later. While he's doing that we take a brief look at some games – very impressive, the lot of them, though all going in directions that make *Flood* look like even more of an anomaly ('We did *Flood* purely to prove we could do something like a platform game', says Peter. 'We didn't want to become known just as the 3D isometric God-sim people') before breaking for lunch down the local pub. It's a nice one, with seats going down towards the river, so we sit outside and talk games and magazines.

We try and think of games that would qualify as 'the most over-rated of all-time', and ones that 'should have been great, but weren't.' Peter talks about the importance of graphic designers to games ('they have at least as much say in the look and feel of them as the programmers, but they're hardly ever covered in magazines') and we try to come up with new ideas for things that we should try and do in Amiga Power. It's here that the idea for our 'Win a job at Bullfrog' competition came from, for instance – flick to page 93 for full details.

'I could teach anyone to program in two weeks'

'When we were doing *Populous* the first journalist to see the game came down – he was from Ace magazine, back in the days when it was with you guys at Future – and I was really worried. What would he think of it? Were we totally barking up the wrong tree, or not? It's so hard to know when you're that close to a project. Thankfully he liked it – this real megastar, big name journalist liked it! In fact, when we came back to the office all he'd do was play it some more. I don't think he realised how much that meant to me.'

It's interesting to know how much outside opinions can mean when you're developing a product, but I can only laugh when I realise this 'big, megastar journalist' was in fact cuddly old Bob Wade, currently editor of our sister magazine Amiga Shopper, occupying the office just next to the Amiga Power one.

As we leave he tells me he'd taken the guys from LOGiN down here too. 'They'd asked where our ideas came from, so we bought them a pint of Burtons Bitter and told them here, this is where – this drink has special creativity-expanding properties. I'm not sure if they swallowed it ha ha, but they certainly drank up their pints.'

Peter Molyneux – *Populous II*

More whirlpools, more fires, more of everything really. That floating island on the top left does the same task as the open book in the first game, giving you an overall map view of your world.

POPULOUS II

This is the big one, I guess, the one that everybody's been wondering about.

So, Peter, how's it different to the first *Populous*?

To a large extent it's just a case of fixing all the things we thought were wrong, or at least could have been improved, in the first one. The game play is basically the same – except for one major difference which I'm not going into at the moment – but there are lots of effects in here that you didn't get in *Populous*. There are about 40 new ones in fact – some of which are brand new, some of which we had in early versions of the first game but dropped somewhere along the line. These include columns of fire, plagues and pestilence, whirlpools, tidal waves, water spouts and so on. Every religious type disaster we can think of we've done in graphic, animated detail. There's even the parting of the Red Sea in there! Not all the effects will be destructive however – you'll be able to fertilise your land so that it produces food faster, which you couldn't do in the first game.

What's the thinking behind adding all this stuff?

We're hoping to make it a bit more hectic than the first *Populous*, more visual and much more of an action game. The effects will play a more important part in the sequence of events – to help with that we've got the basic display working eight times faster than the first game, for instance. You'll see whirlwinds picking people up and throwing them about – each time an effect is used it will have a consequence, and in this case it'd be that the people spread out faster, because they've been thrown around by the whirlwind. We'll have it possible to change the land to channel these natural disasters too – columns of fire will always try to seek the high land, for instance, so if you build the ground up you can actually turn it round and direct it back at your enemy! One thing we've aimed for is having an unpredictability to everything – when you cast an effect, you'll never be sure quite what it will do. It could damage your own town, for instance. We're hoping to have 100s of frames of specialist animation in here, to make it all as visual as possible.

Looking at what you've got so far, the towns look a lot more impressive.

Yes, we've set it in a single time period this time – ancient Greece, so you presumably play one of the Greek gods – and have spent a lot more time on the different buildings and so on. We'll have towns joining up to make major conurbations and all sorts – the more mature your city, the stronger you get. On a normal *Populous* it would take half an hour to do what it'd take you five minutes with this one. The possibilities seem endless – we could do Celtic or Norse data disks for it, for instance.

The layout of the game hasn't changed all that much, though the book seems to have gone.

The view point was so original we've found it difficult to change it too much, to be honest. You can't have any display areas on the top right of the screen, because when you build the land up high it'd totally cover them up. Gary Carr, the graphic artist on this new one, eventually copied the view we've gone for from the box artwork of the original *Populous*, rather than from the game itself.

'Every religious type disaster we can think of we've done in graphic, animated detail'

An impressive effect – a volcano looks set to flood the beginnings of your town. With a bit of luck the little 3D volcano icon on the bottom left will be animated too, spewing out tiny amounts of lava.

Here's something neat – that bloke on the left has just been hit by a lightning bolt. He'll stand there as a charred stick of a man for a few seconds, then crumble into dust.

Back in the office then, and we check out the latest versions of all their new games. Like I said, very impressive they are too – see the various Work In Progress boxes for full details – taking the whole God-sim/ manipulation of little computer characters idea a few notches further on, and certainly in directions I hadn't thought of.

Powermonger must have been a bit of a difficult thing, I suggest. To many people it appeared to be a *Populous II*.

'Well yes,' admits Peter, 'while we were working on that I was constantly aware of *Populous*, and quite often went out of our way to make sure it didn't appear too similar. There were plenty of things we could have put in *Powermonger*, but deliberately saved because they were ear-marked for *Populous II*. Still, at the same time, that was the project where we learned much of stuff that's made both *Populous II* and '*Bob*' possible – the way you can have up to 2000 individual personalities operating in the same game, for instance. That's the limit for these machines, I think.'

Someone goes and makes some coffee, and I'm about to put mine down on this nice flat, black surface next to Peter's desk when I realise what it is. It's a ➔

That makes it look somewhat different to *Populous*, while at the same time keeping a real '*Populous* feel.'

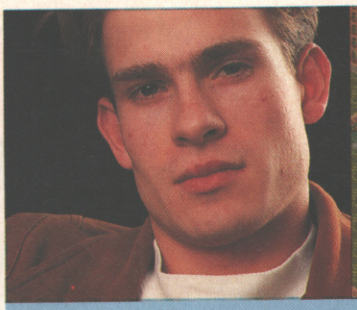
Then you've got the icon controls round the bottom. These can't be too detailed – there's the danger that they'd take away from the main play area if they were – but we're hoping to have these animated too, so that if you select a volcano, say, not only would you get all this land disruption, lava flow and so on in the main play area, you'd also get a mini-version of the event actually appearing on the icon. It's a nice idea, but having said that, there's no guaranteeing we'll be able to make it work on the finished game.

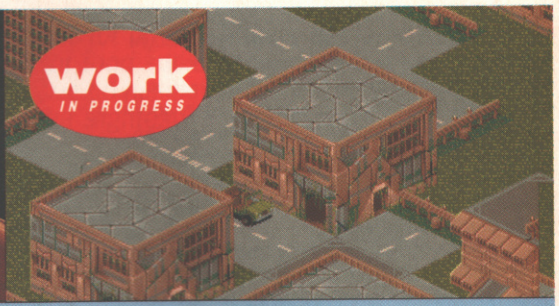
Is this the end of it, or do you think *Populous* will develop yet further?

Well, ***Populous III*** **has already been mentioned in some quarters, but that's an awful long way into the future as far as we're concerned. This new game will make the first one redundant in a way, but I quite like the idea of it developing in the same sort of way the *Space Quest* series did – the later ones didn't make the original any less playable. One thing we're aiming at with *II* is getting a 2-player game onto the same machine, rather than it only being available if you've got two Amigas linked together. That's really tough to do though, but we're going to try, because that's how the game was really meant to be played originally. Maybe in the future we'll look at *Populous II* and think yes, we can really improve on that. Then it'll turn into an evolving thing.**

Populous II will be released around September this year.

Eek! It's a couple of whirlpools, which, as you can see, visibly act upon your little animated men. (Yes, you're right, everything *isn't* to exact scale – that bloke would never fit in that house.)





Sean Cooper – *'Bob'/ Higher Functions*

'The cyborg's aren't too intelligent at the moment,' says Sean, 'they seem to think they're dogs and spend time running after the cars.'

BOB / HIGHER FUNCTIONS

Wssahen I first heard of this I thought '*Bob*' must be the name of some cute little platform game character, perhaps like the chappie in *Flood* – but no. It is, in fact, merely a working title, something that can be typed nice and easily on your standard keyboard. In fact, there's not much that's cute about this game at all.

Actually, it's the same story with 'little.' There's not much that's little about it either. '*Bob*' could quite easily be the best thing Bullfrog have ever done – all the more remarkable when you think it's being written by 20-year old Sean Cooper, the chap who did the bulk of *Flood* and was a mere trainee a short while ago.

Okay then Sean, tell me about '*Bob*.'

I actually prefer the other title we have for it at the moment – *Higher Functions*. It says more about the game.

The idea is that we're someway into the future. You play the head of a large corporation, and it's your task to use fair means or foul to become the top company in the world. It's an extension of the way things are in *Populous*, I guess – you don't ever get directly involved in the action yourself, but control lots of little people from afar. What we've done with this one is we've come closer in on everything – it's still a 3D isometric design, but instead of the viewpoint being as if you were standing on a hill quite a way from the action, here you're standing maybe on the top of a large building. You're that much closer to the action.

The whole game scrolls, doesn't it?

That's right – in all directions. We've got a massive map of a city in here, and we've got it acting as much as possible like a real one. There are little cars driving around the roads, people walking about and so on, as well as an airport, monorail trains and so on. It's a living, breathing city, and one that operates to a realistic time scale. You'll get lots more traffic around at 9.00 in the morning and 5.00 at night, for instance.

'It's an extension of the way things are in *Populous* (but) you're that much closer to the action'

***Populous* was originally built from Lego – this one seems based on one of those Matchbox cars play-mats!**

The background world seems very impressive, but how does the game actually work?

When I said we've come in tighter on things, that applies the characters you control too. Instead of manipulating whole societies, here you control just four characters. They're cyborgs created by your corporation, and they're your agents in the game. Don't treat them as arobots though – they have their own personalities, and if you're not careful will run off and do their own thing rather than follow your orders. To control them you stimulate their brains to produce more chemicals – sensory fluid to make them more aware, adrenalin to make them stronger and initiative to allow them to make their own decisions. There's a danger to all this though – give them too much initiative and their loyalty will go. They'll just run away. Even with a low initiative level they react to their environment – if you tell one to stand in the middle of the road he'll run off when a car looks likely to knock him down. They're not stupid.

And the missions you have to accomplish?

They're sort of secret agent/dirty business sort of things. One job may be to kill a journalist – ha ha, that's Peter's favourite! – who's going to write something bad about your corporation and so send your stock values plummeting.

A lot of the game is to do with earning money for your corporation – these cyborgs cost a lot, and the more money you make, the more you can spend on improving them, repairing them or making them more specific to one task. You can build one man up to be more technically minded for instance. We hope to have an option where four people with linked machines could control a man each, which would be fun.

What you've got to remember is that everything's as real-world as possible – you can't be caught doing anything bad because that would damage your company.

So what stage is it at at the moment?

We've got all the basics there, but we've not decided on how all the missions or maps will work yet. We're thinking in terms of taking some bits outside of the city – perhaps into a jungle, or out onto oil rigs, ships and the like.Then there's fitting it all into half a meg, of course, but that's another problem.

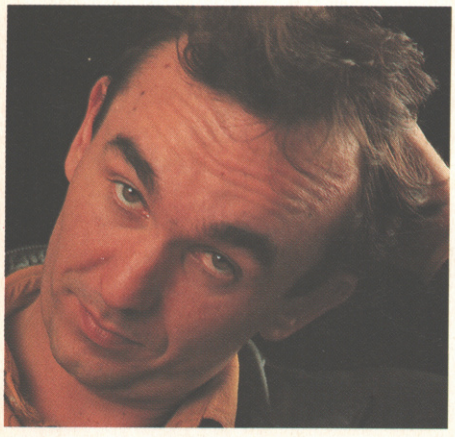
'Bob'/ Higher Functions will be released some time next year.

CD TV. What's that doing there then, Peter?

'Commodore sent us one – it's nice to be thought of, but unfortunately there are no instructions to go with it, and the little carriage thing to take the actual CDs appears to be missing, so we can't actually do much with it. It's nice to have though.' This seems like an obvious link to getting an opinion on whether CD-TV is actually a good idea or not, and being an obvious sort of a person I take it. So, erm, what do you think of CD-TV, Peter?

'I think the concept's great – to have a computer inside something that looks like a video recorder is a Good Idea. The problem with computers is that they look a mess – they've got all these horrible wires everywhere. The problem with CD-TV, on the other hand, is one of timing. If it was released a year ago it'd be brilliant, but as it is lots of other people are already making exactly the same thing – I believe Tandy are, for instance – and theirs will be cheaper and potentially more powerful. What Commodore failed to do was get sample machines out to programming houses a good year or six months before release. If you remember when the ST and Amiga came out it was a few bits of (at the time) stunning software that sold the computers, and Commodore aren't going to have that this time'.

The drive home looms. Painfully aware that I haven't got Peter to admit any big secrets about Bullfrog (I still haven't the faintest idea what their secret project is – 'It may even be another platform game' he teases at one point) or say anything ridiculously controversial, I try and come up with a good parting shot. I can't think of one though, so instead we go with 'What's the secret of great games then, Peter?'



'Playtesting...is proving to be one of the most important parts of the development of *Populous II*

'Playtesting.'

Oh great, it's a one word answer. Erm, can you expand upon that at all?

'One of the problems with trying to come up with original ideas for games is that there's always the risk that you'll get half way through the project and find out that it just isn't working. The other problem is that they take a long time anyway – when you add the proper amount of playtesting they take an awful long time. Often products are forced out before they've had a sufficient amount of time spent on just checking if they work for the player, and that's where things can really go wrong.

'It was only by playing *Populous* again and again that we could make it as good as it was, and actually playing the thing is proving to be one of the most important parts of the development of *Populous II*.'

But surely that's not half as important as actually having the programming skill to start with?

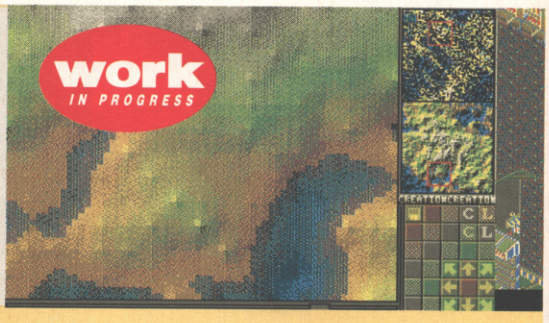
'Programming isn't that hard – I could teach anyone to program in two weeks, and the way we work at Bullfrog is we'd rather take on young enthusiastic people and train them up than take on experienced programmers. It's keeping your ideas and enthusiasm for a project flowing that's the tricky part. It's only by working in a team that you can do that – it's almost impossible on your own. The only way you make a game good is by playing it, getting other people to play it, and enjoying it yourself.'

So that's the secret?

'Yes. In the future I expect each project to take five years, not one or so, and for half that time to be spent playtesting. That's the way games will get better – I think it's at least as important as people having original ideas.'

I'm thinking about that as we leave, and I'm sure he's right. Having said that though, you just have to look at the games on these pages to see that there's a wealth of new ideas here – something so few people seem to be concentrating on these days – and that's what makes what Bullfrog are doing really exciting. If there's anybody out there currently developing this many projects that could truly be said to be different – and beyond being different that actually look like they'll *work* – I'd like to see them. Sad to say, I'd be very surprised if there are. ■

Glenn Corpes – *Creation*



These striking contour maps from *Creation* have yet to have the all important creatures added – just try and imagine them, okay?

CREATION

Creation is a lot further off than the other projects – one for well into next year. The basic idea is that you're messing about with creating different life forms to survive in different circumstances. It's almost an anti-God sim – it's evolution that holds sway here.

How does that work then? Well, say you have a giraffe over here on the left hand side of the screen, eating leaves and so on, while over on the right there's a large but attractive elephant. The giraffe might reckon that having a nose that long would prove very useful for those tricky-to-reach higher branches, while the elephant's rather jealous of the giraffe's long neck for similar reasons. So they mate (don't worry! You won't be able to see them humping on screen!) and you get a girelephant or whatever, with a long neck and a long nose. The idea is that you can break animals down into their constituent parts and the game, well, the game is that you've got to try and create the ultimate life form – like man, say, or perhaps like ants – which can survive more or less anything.

You have to admit, this is a bit of a tricky one to get your mind around. Can you give us an example as to how the game will actually work?

Okay, well say you have some giant flesh-eating 'Trisaurus Rex' creatures in this bit of land over on the top right of the map, and lots of fluffy bunny rabbits down in the bottom left. All is fine and dandy, until the game throws some changes in weather at you which send the 'Trisaurus Rex' population down into the south-west. They're going to start eating all the bunnies, aren't they, and soon there'll be none left. What you've got to do in this instance is create a creature to drive off or eat the Trisaurus Rex population, while leaving the bunnies alone.

'It's almost an anti-god sim – it's evolution that holds sway here'

Here's another example: you've got a life form on an island, say a race of elks – and they're running out of food. You've got to save them, but there's nothing on the island to cross them with to create a race of swimming or flying elks, so you've got to create a life form on the mainland which will somehow contribute to save them. How about a race of beaver-type creatures who'll build a bridge, for instance?

It's all sort of like a game of consequences. As the game goes on it gets more and more complicated. Once you've created a life form there's no easy getting rid of it – you've got to cope with the actions of whatever it is you've come up with.

Creation will be released some time next year.

AP **WIN A JOB AT BULLFROG!** Yes, it's true! For full details flip to page 93! (And get your thinking caps on – you're going to need them!)

THE **Midnight Oil**

NOW CONTAINS 1990 NFL TEAM/PLAYER DATA!*

"From my point of view, the game has kept me sitting up at nights and through holidays and weekends for up to 12 hours at a stretch, with miniscule breaks for food and other necessities.....It is a game I have no hesitiation in recommending to anyone with even the slightest interest in American Football."

ATARI USER REVIEW

OUR PRIORITY: GAMEPLAY

HEADCOACH V.3

THE GAME

Headcoach is teh complete American Football simulation. You take charge of the latest recruit to the National Football League, and through skilful designe of gameplans and the use of the college draft, build up a 45 man squad to keep your fans happy and win the Superbowl. Unlimited seasons, and ageing players, produce a realistic game of fluctuating fortunes.

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The match is a game in itself taking about 40 minutes to complete. With 26 offensive plays and 21 defensive plays, there is ample scope to match your gameplan to the skills of your squad, and exploit the weaknesses of your opposition. It's here where the strengths and weaknesses of your own players are highlighted.

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IF I'D KNOWN THEN...

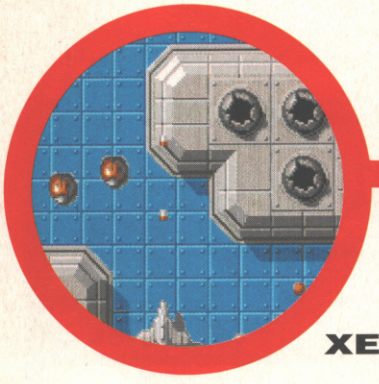
ERIC MATTHEWS has quite a few classic computer games under his belt – the Speccy version of *Scalextric*, bits of *Monopoly* on the Amstrad, *ST Karate* for Eidersoft, the list goes on. Then he met Steve Kelly (the legendary name behind games like Psion's *Chequered Flag* and *Match Point*) and, later, Mike Montgomery, through various bits of freelance work, fortune started to smile a bit, and, well, the rest is history. Looking backwards though, what does he think of his old games now..?

XENON 2

This is one of my designs. What I like is the amount of variety in it – all the baddies act in different ways. We took all the best things from our favourite arcade games, chiefly the mega-power ups, and put them in one game – I don't think there's another Amiga shoot-'em-up with as many weapons. I still enjoy it when I play it – it doesn't feel dated at all.

The graphics and sound were the stunning things of course – I remember a showing it to a guy from the French magazine Tilt, and he thought it was the coin-op we were about to convert, not the finished game! If we were doing it now I'd mainly think a bit harder about the strategy elements – if you get the wrong weapons it becomes a very different, almost impossible, game. What else is wrong with it? Well, there's a shield that you can't buy in the shop which only crops up once in the game, which is a bit of a waste. Some people complain about the collision detection too, but I don't know what they're on about. What happened was we reduced the detection area of each shot so we could fit that many weapons in – it just means you have to hit something dead on to kill it. At least you can beat the end of level baddies in this one, which is more than you could say for the first game!

For the new CD-TV version Tim Simenon has done us a choice of seven different mixes of Megablast, so you can chose the one you like while you play. We've added an interactive manual too – everything is controlled from the shop sequence, but now you call up information on Bomb The Bass and so on if you want too.

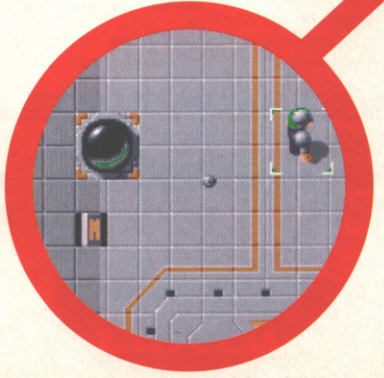


XENON

This was Steve's really – it brings back good memories, he says. It was a joy not to be limited by 8-bit colours or having to cram everything in any more, certainly. We were very impressed with the speed and graphic routines we had at the time, but we're 50% faster than that now – though the game still feels nice it can't really compete with the likes of *Xenon 2*.

Faults? Well, the first end of level guardian is too hard to beat for the average game player – I think Steve's beginning to admit that now – and at the end of each level you lost all the weapons you'd collected. I really can't remember why we did that now. I still think it's a good game though – it looked different to other games at the time, and it was the one that started this whole Bitmaps thing.

The bloke at the beginning who says 'Sector One' and so on is me, by the way – though I changed the picture a bit to give myself a better hair cut! On the early versions which we showed to Virgin (before they rejected it, ha!) we had a digitised version of the newsreader Richard Baker in there – perhaps we should have left him in after all!



SPEEDBALL

This was originally designed to be a game on one of those old Amiga-based multi-selection arcade machines, which is why it works so well in two player mode. The first version was going to take place on a single screen, with four goals – one on each wall – and disembodied hands on view rather than full players. We went more like football in the end though.

Steve says he's got good memories of the learning curve we went through while doing this game – we spent about one and a half months coding it, then four and a half getting the play to feel right. It was the first time we'd spent that much effort on the play testing. It was another first too – we hadn't used Mark Coleman on graphics before.

For the time I think it's just about as good as it could have been, though now I wish you could change ends on it – playing down the screen in this sort of game is a real disadvantage. Going back to it after *Speedball 2* is quite weird – it feels like you're playing in a shoe box, it's so claustrophobic.

CADAVER

This one was down to Steve and Phil Wilcox. We used isometric 3D because it's the best way to get real interaction without using 3D vector graphics. What we were aiming for was the complexity of a text adventure but working graphically, with a direct interface between player and game, lots of varied puzzles (some logic based, some very arcade-like, with lever-pulling and so on) and none of this train-spottery, complicated role-playing rubbish to get in the way.

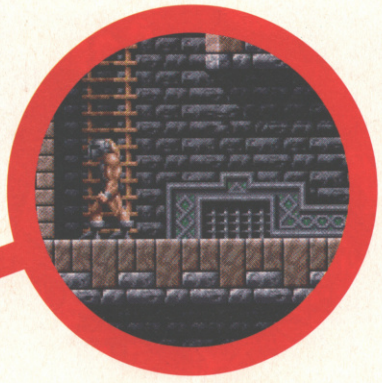
I think the problems we had were in terms of publicity and public reaction – people didn't expect a real adventure game from us, they expected an arcade adventure. In fact what we were aiming for was something like *Dungeon Master* – an adventure game that appeals to arcade players – but because it looks like *Knightlore* or *Treasure Trap*, that's what people thought it was going to be. Probably it could have been promoted in a more clear sort of way, so everyone knew what the game was really all about, but it's a bit late now. Oh yes, Steve says the animation on the main character should have been better too.

GODS

Well, despite what Amiga Power said, ha ha, this was an original game. Briefly, the best things about it are the multiple ways you can solve the puzzles and the long term challenge to what is, on the surface of it, an arcade game. It has all the best elements of platform games – lots of hidden rooms and so on like in *Super Mario Land* or whatever – plus all sorts of weapons and potions to use, which people like. It's the sort of game you can play for ages, and even complete, without coming across all the hidden stuff that's in there.

I'm very pleased with the artificial intelligence too, though it's a pig to do. That took four months on its own. The fundamental thing here is that you get the feeling that you are in a landscape with something else alive in there, and you can't always predict what it's going to do.

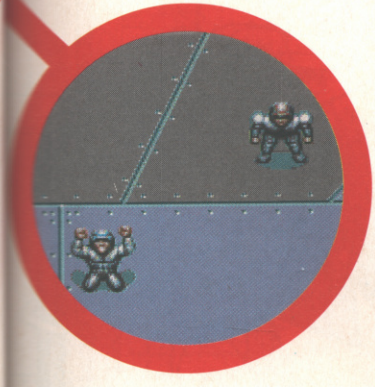
We've no plans for a *Gods 2*, but one thing that would be nice is to have it so that when you throw a knife, say, the baddies can pick them up and throw them back at you – it would make the feeling that you were competing with real creatures that much more intense.



THE BITMAP BROTHERS

(AS A CONCEPT)

What happened was that we were fed up with the way programmers are presented – you know, 500 guys in anoraks stuffed in a back room somewhere. When C&VG did a piece on *Xenon* they wanted us to sit on top of an arcade machine with space helmets on our heads and we thought no way – you're not making us look like a bunch of plonkers – so we got our own pictures done instead. The idea was originally meant to be a piss take of all these arrogant little computer whiz-kids that were about at the time – that's why we had those pictures taken with the cars and the helicopter – but everyone thought it was real, that was what we were like, and it stuck.



SPEEDBALL 2

With this one we knew we had to make it quite different to be worth doing. The increased screen size was to make it more exciting when you got into the other player's area – as it is in *Kick Off* or whatever. In the first game you can just throw the ball all the way down the pitch, which makes it far too easy.

The artificial intelligence works well too – though occasionally the men are too bright for their own good, and will run off after a token when they're standing right in front of the goal, have the ball, and should be trying to score! We should have put something in there to prioritize them correctly, so they realised that scoring was more important than collecting things. I like the management aspect as well – we really exaggerated it so that if you've built up a player to be fast, he really will be. You can see the difference immediately on screen. With most management games – which aren't the sort of games I'd ever normally play, I have to admit – you might as well have changed nothing, for all the difference it seems to make during play.

We've no plans for a *Speedball 3* – though there are 10 or 11 of us in the Bitmaps now, so perhaps someone else would like to take a crack at it – but there are a few new things it would be nice to add. I've always thought it would have been good to be able to save teams to disk so you could play them around at your friend's house, or to have different pitches that affect play. Perhaps you could have a custom option in there too, so you could create your own home pitch. Some of these are ideas we actually thought of while we were doing *2*, but didn't pursue properly for various reasons – mainly because they seemed too hard!

THE FUTURE

Personally, as far as the things I'm going to be working on are concerned, I'm going to be developing this artificial intelligence idea yet further. Like I said, it's a pig to do, but that's what interests me at the moment. That's not to say that's what all Bitmap products will be like though – there are enough of us now that we can go off in quite a few different directions at once.

I know Peter said it about *Powermonger*, but it's the same with us – finishing off *Gods* was horrid, and I never want to go through that again. We will though – it's always the same when you're at the end of a project. We had the programmer Steve Tall sleeping in the office for three weeks, I was working 24 hour shifts – it's the last 1% of the game, the playtesting, that can take months. That's what the future really holds, I'm afraid – lots and lots of late nights.

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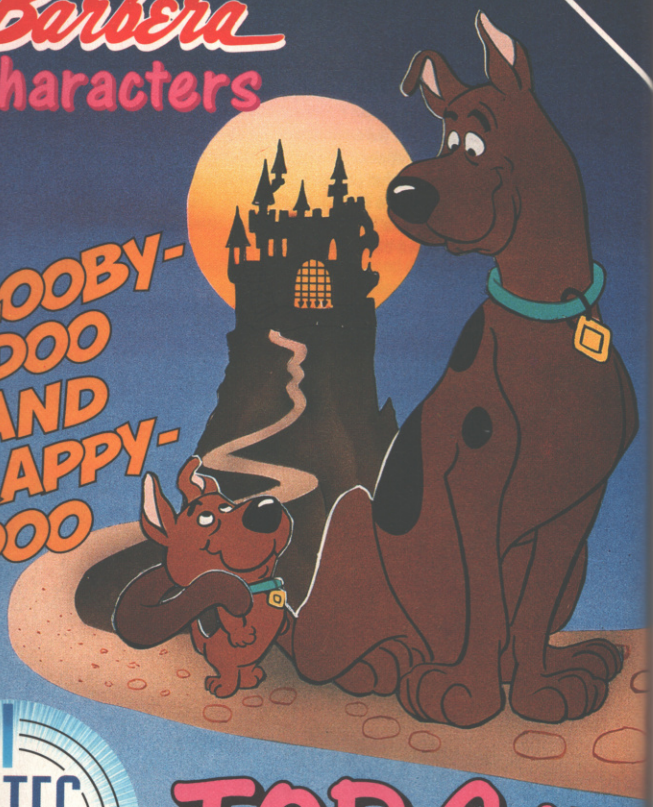

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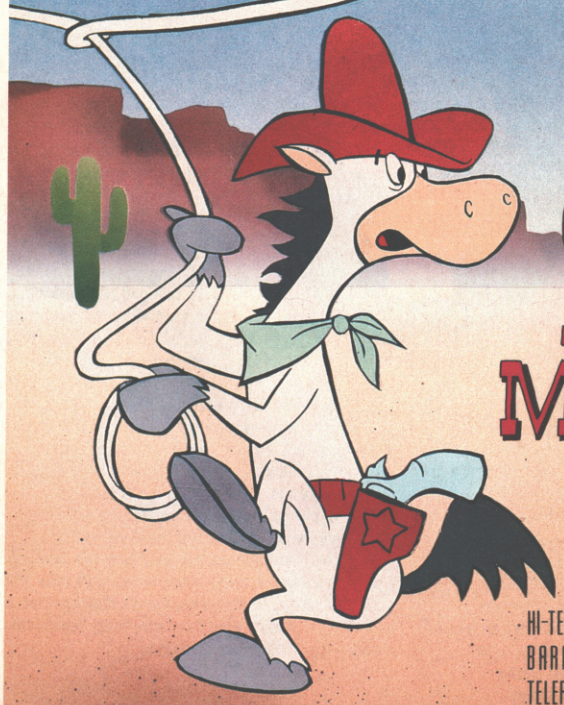

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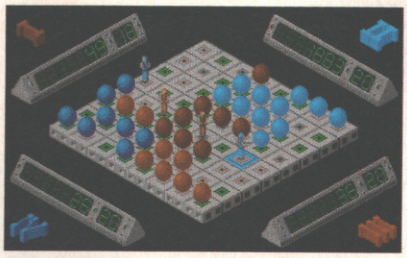
GAME REVIEWS

CONTINUED

Welcome back to the AMIGA POWER reviews. On page 86 we start our budget and compilation coverage, but first here are the rest of this month's full price games...

THE BALL GAME

Publisher: Electronic Zoo
Price: £25.99
Author: ESP
Release: Out now



An intriguing but flawed game involving coloured balls, enigmatically titled *The Ball Game*.

Now this is odd. *The Ball Game* is a strange computerised board game with elements of Go and Othello – but also a remarkable similarity to a Mastertronic game called *Infection* which was previewed by other magazines some time ago but never released (not to mention an arcade game based on it called *Attax*, and the forthcoming Virgin product *Spot*). In the *Ball Game* version, between one and four players can play, in any combination of computer and humans, at skill levels ranging from 'Very Easy' to 'Ludicrous'. I don't have space to fully explain the rules here – it's all about little men jumping around the board, leaving coloured inflatable balls in their wake and trying to get close enough to spray-paint the coloured balls of the opposition – but they're very easy to get to grips with, and the game proves to be essentially very interesting and actually quite gripping.

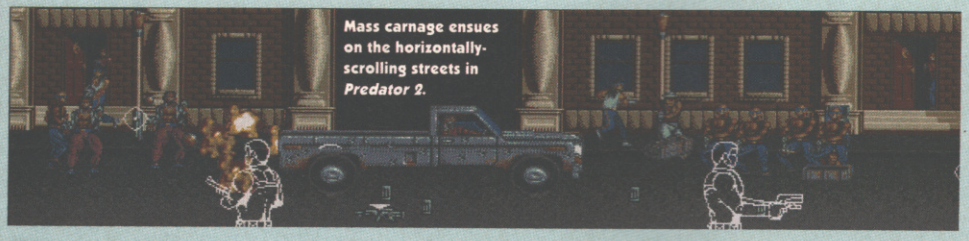
There are several problems with this version, though – not least the introduction of a random teleport element which wasn't in the original *Infection* version of the game. (I can't understand why they introduced such a wild card to what is essentially a game of strategy and wits) Graphically, too, things could perhaps be clearer – on anything less than the crispest monitors the colours of the balls can become hard to distinguish at times. In addition, playing at anything other than the very easiest level introduces a long delay in waiting for the computer players to make a move, and this, coupled with the fact that the game by its very nature takes quite a while to really get going, proves to be something of a fatal flaw.

Basically then, what we have here is a potentially brilliant board game, slightly spoiled by a couple of pointless twiddles and irritating inconsistencies. It's good, but it's at five times the intended price of *Infection* and proves to be something of a lesser game. • *STUART CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE

Good fun with lots of pals, but struggles to hold the interest when played against the computer. An interesting game design, slightly ineptly executed and not really worth the daft price tag.

56 PERCENT



Mass carnage ensues on the horizontally-scrolling streets in *Predator 2*.

The Hunt Continues (for a decent way to convert an action film).

PREDATOR 2

Publisher: Image Works
Price: £25.99
Author: Arc Developments
Julian Scott (Programming)
Paul Walker (Graphics)
Justin Schwarvona (Music)
Release: Out now

Of all the licensed wares in the world, computerised versions of films must be the most awkward to put together. Invariably the licensor imposes restrictions aplenty, which makes life all the more difficult when it comes to producing a product with decent gameplay. Take *Predator 2* ...

What we have here is an *Operation Wolf* style blaster spread across four levels, each preceded by a picture and text description to set the scene. Something else the levels have in common is gangs of gun-toting drug-baron minions who attack Lieutenant Harrigan (played by Danny Glover on the silver screen, but in this case you). It's not too difficult to guess what the objective is...

Bad men, bullets and grenades aren't the only things to fill the horizontally scrolling playfield. Innocent bystanders run around like headless chickens, and if you shoot too many of them you can kiss your badge goodbye.

But what of the Predator? Bad luck – the creature you came to see plays a background role in the early stages, using its chameleon-like abilities to blend in with the scenery until the finale. Mind you, it does have a habit of taking out a few of the bad guys for you – just for fun.

Look closely at some screens (but not this one) and you'll see the shimmery Predator effect. (He's the one that looks like a stray Spectrum graphic.)

Sadly, Harrigan's trusty .45 Magnum has a slow fire-rate and, despite being the most powerful handgun in the world, a single shot isn't enough to despatch foes. It's frustrating, but more so is the fact that the proceedings slow down when there's too much happening on screen. At least the Magnum's ammunition is in unlimited supply, unlike the other weapons picked up along the way.

A few less adversaries but with more prominent behaviour and distinguishable characteristics would have helped, and a greater contrast of colours certainly would – intense concentration is required to make out who's who and what's what and it's enough to make your eyes water.

The peripheral vision effect works well, but being able to see a wireframe Harrigan isn't effective: it looks a little too odd to be believable to see him sliding along with the scrolling screen.

Predator 2 doesn't succeed in coming across as a two-disk product worth a penny short of 26 quid. The addition of a film poster or some stills would have added extra value, but as it stands all that's on offer here is short-term entertainment. • *GARY PENN*

More 'booms' and 'bangs' than a Eurovision Song Contest entry. (Erm, sorry. Gary wrote this caption).

THE BOTTOM LINE

Quite simply a very average blaster in the *Operation Wolf* tradition. *Predator 2* lacks suitable emotional hooks to make you want to play and is insufficiently varied to keep you going.

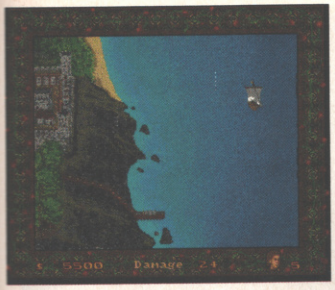
53 PERCENT

SWORDS AND GALLEONS

Publisher: Idea
Price: £25.99
Author: Luca Podestà
Release Date: Out now

Any game that promises `suggestive, detailed graphics' has got to be worth loading up. So I did. Unfortunately, with the possible exception of the Queen of the Red Coral Sea on the title screen, *Swords and Galleons* is decidedly tame, pointing to some ropy Italian-English translation on the back of the box.

Swords and Galleons – says it all, really. You've got a sword, and a galleon, and you've got to sail around collecting



The Italians make their UK trading/strategy game debut with the surprisingly endearing *Swords And Galleons*.

treasure, sinking pirate ships and finally rescuing the queen from the clutches of the evil Varisco. Having embarked on your travels you'll find that you've also got five crew members and a few gold pieces. Barely enough to be going on with. You'll need to take on a few more men pretty sharpish, and some supplies if you're to avoid too much urine drinking.

Attacking a baddie ship takes you to an arcadey bit where you load and fire your cannons, and if you're successful you'll be able to board the enemy and nick all his stuff. (It's disconcertingly similar to an old MicroProse game called *Pirates*).

Got the general picture? The weird thing is, *Swords and Galleons* is one of those games which looks completely crap on paper but turns out to be surprisingly good fun to play. There's something strangely compulsive about sailing from port to port gradually getting richer and more powerful. Points against it are the constant disk swapping, no save facility (a heinous ommision when you consider that games stretch over hours) and the likely ease of completion if you stick with it.

It's a very minor corker, then, which won't sell many but could conceivably inspire fanatical devotion from those who give it a go. • *JONATHAN DAVIES*

THE BOTTOM LINE

It shouldn't be any good at all, but for some reason I found it oddly unputdownable. (At least I would have if they'd put in a save game facility).

54 PERCENT

No, this isn't the successor to *Chuck Rock* we expected either!

WARZONE

The slice of action below represents just over half of the first level.

It's getting tough now. Watch out for those missiles!

Collect that star for bonus energy.

The block is an enemy gun position. (Proceed with caution).

Shoot open the cases with a W on them, to reveal a new weapon.

Gain extra points by saving prisoners.

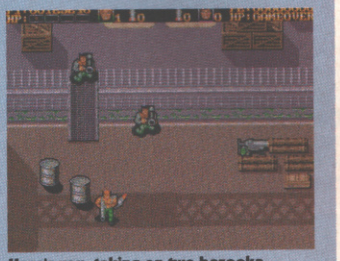
Here's where the action starts. (Once you stop paddling, that is).

Publisher: Core Design
Price: £20.99
Author: John Kirkland, (graphics) Terry Lloyd
Release: Out now

There aren't many 'full-price' Amiga games coming in under the £25 mark these days, so it's nice to see Core putting out an unashamedly simple game at a price that acknowledges that fact. And games don't come very much simpler than *Warzone*, for – yes! – it's another clone of the well-worn *Ikari Warriors*.

You (and a chum, if you want) march up eight scrolling levels of slaughter and violence, violently slaughtering anything that gets in your way – as well as a few things that didn't but you felt were worth making a detour for anyway. There are power-ups to collect, big armoured vehicles to pump lead into at the end of every level, and a never-ending supply of cannon-fodder bad guys. So that's enough about *Ikari Warriors*, what about *Warzone*?

This is a nice-looking game, not perhaps as pretty as *Mercs*, but more cartoony and with a bit more character to it. The sound is completely unremarkable, and badly needs a rousing tune, but what effects there are are perfectly satisfactory. Some of the later levels constrict your freedom of movement quite severely, and on top of the doesn't-really-work-at-all 3D, this can spoil the feel of realism somewhat. Play is fairly slow, but no more so than most games of the type, and the amount of shooting required to dispose of many of the tougher baddies seems pitched just the wrong side of high to make the game really enjoyable. Difficulty generally is good – even the first level is fairly challenging – and it'll take a pretty mean player to finish the game quickly (if indeed at all).



Here's you, taking on two bazooka-happy goons. (Luckily some thoughtful chap has left some heavy-duty firepower lying around over there on the right.)

The over-riding feeling though, is that this, like the similar *Mercs*, is competent without ever being all that exciting. If you must have another *Ikari* game, it's as good a bet as any, and £5 cheaper than most, but that's the most positive thing I can find to say about it. • *STUART CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE

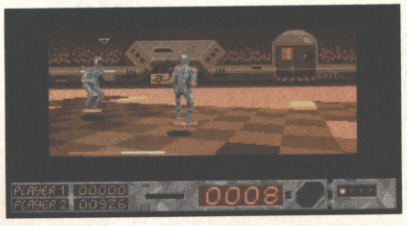
Core set themselves a high standard with *Chuck Rock*, and *Warzone* doesn't live up to it (not that it's really meant to, probably). Good in a 'so what?' sort of a way.

65 PERCENT

STORMBALL

Publisher: Millennium
Price: £24.99
Author: Paul Carruthers
Release: Out now

Stormball is the latest in a long line of future sports games. You know the sort of thing – metallic-looking graphics, 'atmospheric' futuristic intro sequence, and a basic game that (stripped of all the frills) turns out to be something very simple indeed. Here it's *Pong* (you remember, the very first bat-and-ball computer game) that gets the treatment. You play a chap standing on a floating disk in the middle of an arena, and it's your job to bat the ball into the other half of the pitch, have it travel over some point-scoring squares, bounce off the far wall and hopefully travel back into your half, where you can collect it and try again. The only problem is that the other guy's out to intercept the ball, and then do exactly the same to you.



Millennium's *Stormball* in one player mode. Here you are taking on a computer controlled opponent.

Initially the game looks very impressive. The pitch is a pretty 3D thing, viewed from just behind your little floating player. Points whizz up into the air coin-op style as you score them, there's an animated betting sequence before each game (you have to pay an 'entry fee' before you can challenge anyone, and it's only by gambling that you can earn enough money to take on the sport's more expensive star players) and there are various practice options allowing you to customise and save your own layout of playing pitch.

All well and good – the problems come once you start playing, when everything quite rapidly begins to make very little sense indeed. Since the walls to the oddly shaped courts you play on – located in the middle of a larger arena – are actually invisible, judging how the ball is going to bounce proves very difficult indeed. I'd just got to the stage where I'd got a vague idea of what was meant to be happening when – what's this? – the ball actually went right through one wall and continued across the arena floor for a bit (you could see its little shadow and everything). Hmm. Obviously these are 'elastic walls' – which bend when the ball hits them like the ropes in a boxing ring or something – which complicates things further.

Add this confusion to the fact that it's very hard to see where the targets are – let alone keep track of the ball – and you get a game that looks good, but in play proves very off-putting indeed. Nothing about it made me want to persevere at all.

My recommendation? Scrap the pretty 3D, give us a simple top-down view, and you'd suddenly make it twice the game. • *MATT BIELBY*

THE BOTTOM LINE

Pretty, but underneath lies a very simple game vastly over complicated and made confusing to play. Yet another that would have benefited from a proper thinking through before they started.

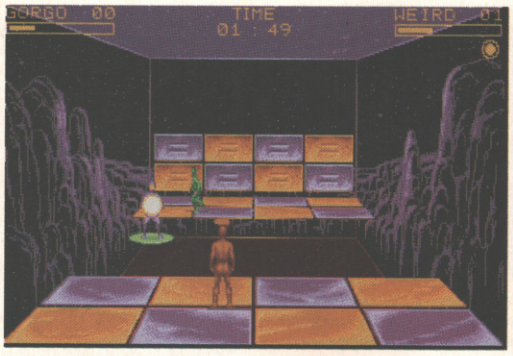
51 PERCENT

DISC

Publisher: Loriciel
Author: Alexis Leseigneur
Price: £24.99
Release Date: Out now

Once upon a time, in a galaxy far, far away (well actually in an arcade in Blackpool), I played a coin-op game called *Discs Of Tron*. Based on a sequence from the Disney movie, it featured two guys standing on floating discs suspended in mid-air and throwing deadly frisbees at each other, trying either to destroy their opponent's discs so he would fall to the floor, or kill him outright by hitting him with the frisbee. It was quite fun in a simple sort of a way, but I'm surprised to say the least to see it crop up as a full-price Amiga game in 1991. Still, that's what we have here from Loriciel, albeit with a couple of minor tweaks in the form of some dish-water dull power-ups, and a strange system of altering the properties of the frisbees so that they can damage their owner as well as his opponent. And sad to say, it's rubbish. (Hey, this is only a short review, I've got to get to the point quickly – there's not enough time for any pussy-footing around.)

The carefully-balanced gameplay of the arcade machine has been ruined, to the extent that for a lot of the time only one of the protagonists is actually able to do anything, while the other wanders around aimlessly without any weaponry, trying to avoid the frisbees flying in his direction roughly once every five seconds. Sound like a recipe for a major snoozerama? It is. Of course, there are varying skill levels and various options for training modes and such like, but the truth of the matter is that the actual game itself simply isn't worth the effort. (And this becomes even more abundantly clear when you



A typically European colour scheme and some pedestrian game ideas do not a great game make. If you thought the film Tron was lacking, just wait until you see this classic of mediocrity.

EA, like so many before, make a flawed bid for the cinematic strategy market.

CENTURION

Publisher: Electronic Arts
Price: £24.99
Programmer: Kellyn Beck
Release Date: Out now

I've never thought the Romans were much cop. Dressing up in a leather skirt and sticking a feather duster on your head is a rather odd way of going about combat duty if you ask me. But as history proves, it worked. By the 1st century AD they'd accumulated an empire stretching all the way from Britain in the north west down to Egypt in the south, and were duly bouncing up and down on their velvet cushions and scoffing lots of grapes to celebrate.

Not that you can afford to be so frisky in *Centurion – Defender Of Rome*. Oh dear me no. This is all jolly serious stuff about a cocky officer chappy who wants to rise up through the ranks and become Caesar. A lofty aim to be sure - but one that's just about feasible if you conquer enough countries on the battlefield, while at the same time making sure you keep the plebs happy so they don't get all crotchety and rebel against you. As a strategy game it's good; as an 'empire management' game it's not too bad; and as an arcader, well, it has to be said some of it stinks.

But first the good news - the battle arcade sequences. Your legion is laid out beneath you in 'live it and breathe it' realism viewed from a 45° bird's-eye angle. You choose its formation and fighting tactic and then wait to see how the opposition line themselves up against you. At this point you'll probably suffer an initial attack of panic – your best idea might well be to interrupt play to check on the strengths of individual units and then alter the tactics of the ones on your side to compensate. And then you run for the hills. It's a bit of a gas really, and once you've got the hang of which tactic to use where and when it should be enough to get the adrenalin pumping through your various vessels fast enough.

BATTLE SCREEN

Here's the legion, all set up and ready to go in a 'Balanced Formation'.

Melée. Command a unit to ignore all previous instructions and go and fight alone.

Okay, let's get on with it.

Your legion's divided up into units of varying numbers, each with their own stamina levels.

Retreat. Flee. Vamoosh, etc.

Your general. Check out his charisma and sphere of influence to see how well his troops respect him.

And here's the enemy doing a bit of a head charge in our general direction.

OUT IN THE FIELD

A Balanced Formation is probably one of the first positions you'll try, but here are the three others.

add the effort required to make sense of the unforgiveably badly-translated manual.

Graphically *Disc* is alright I guess, but the replacing of the original discs with rectangular tiles spoils the abstract look of the game, while the animation of what few moving graphics there are leaves a little to be desired. Soundwise nothing very much happens at all, and unfortunately that's also a pretty good summary of the game in general. • *STUART CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE

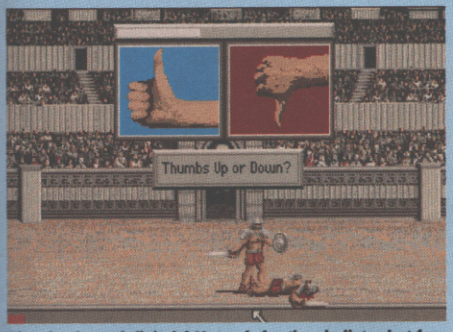
A passable budget game with a ridiculous price tag. For £25, don't even bother to think about it.

41 PERCENT

Abstract graphics and aliens who'll shoot you before you have time to say 'Gosh, it looks like *Battlezone*', in *Amiga Encounter*. Level one may be quite easy, but it sure gets the adrenalin going.

Out in deep space. Shoot enough UFOs on one planet, and you'll be greeted by this sequence. The idea? Simply to dodge the asteroids and other debris before reaching the next planet.

The Chariot Race. Er, hang on a minute, chaps – can we start that one again please?



Thumbs down definitely! Not only for the gladiator but for the whole fighting sequence. It really is quite pitiful.

And now for the stinky stuff. One way of making sure your plebs don't get too rattish is to host games for them. Two of these are arcade sequences – the Chariot Race and the Gladiator Fight. In the first you buy your 'cart', gamble a bit on the predicted outcome and then scootle off round the track. Only you won't have any inclination to do anything of the sort once you see how it works. The overhead-view playing area is too small and follows your wagon up-screen, meaning that you can only steer left and right and your only gauges of speed and progression (aside from the indistinct circuit map at the top) are the other competitors. When they race ahead and disappear off the top of the track you really are a bit stumped – you haven't the faintest idea where you are or anything. A *Supercars*-style approach mightn't have allowed for such fine-looking wagons but at least you'd have been able to play it.

As for the Gladiator Fight, the less said about that the better. It's all about two blokes who clobber each other with all the enthusiasm of a couple of dead fish. Slow's the word, but there ought to be a better one.

The successful wargame-style strategy aside then, *Centurion*'s a game that falls between two stools. It should either have been a much more engaging and complex management game (aside from throwing bread and circus parties the only other thing you tend to do is collect taxes, and that quickly becomes all too simple and repetitive) or it should have done more on the arcade side. One alternative option would have been to loosen things up a bit, take the action sequences up a notch and opt for a more jokey approach along the lines of *North And South*. And although it certainly looks very pretty, I'd dispute EA's claim that it's a 'cinematic adventure' like no other - there are just as many static picture postcard graphics here as I've seen anywhere. So, all in all, not half as much fun as a video of Caligula and £15 more expensive. • *ANDY IDE*

THE BOTTOM LINE

A good strategy game when it's out on the field, but let down by some dull empire housekeeping and a couple of real clinker arcade sequences.

57 PERCENT

AMIGA ENCOUNTER

Publisher: Novagen
Price: £20.42
Author: Paul Woakes
Release date: Out now

The story behind this, if I remember it all correctly, is a bit of an odd one. *Encounter* is an ancient Atari XL/C64 game (a 'classic', if you will) from author Paul Woakes, who of course later went on to fame and fortune etc with *Mercenary*, *Damocles* et al. *Amiga Encounter*, on the other hand, is an all-new 16-bit version of the same thing – a real early arcade-style throwback, with the incredibly simple gameplay spiced up by, well, by extra colour, and some swisher sound and, um, that's about it really. Novagen have gone for a quiet sort of release with it too, apparently preferring the idea of old fans just lucking upon it in the shops rather than reading about it in magazines and going out specifically to buy a copy.

So how's their plan worked out? Well, the blast-from-the-past gameplay will be a breath of fresh air to a certain sort of pure-reactions, adrenalin-loving arcade gamesplayers, that's for sure. The idea (viewed from a first person perspective) is that you are driving (or something) multi-directionally across the surface of a fast scrolling 3D world, ducking behind these sort of pillar affairs as they appear on the landscape, firing at the enemies (floating squares of light, flying saucers and other futuristic shapes), then popping into a nearby stargate for a bit of quick asteroid dodging, before emerging again for the next, trickier level. Yes, it really is a sort of abstract *Battlezone* if ever there was one – not really perhaps quite what we expect for twenty odd quid these days (it plays no faster and really looks little different to the C64 version, for instance) but absorbing fun nonetheless. It wears its simplicity on its sleeve like a badge, and you have to admit, the fast-moving cat-and-mouse chase aspect is very absorbing indeed – it's a bit like playing one of those paintball games, all ducking and diving behind things, firing blindly, constantly watching your back and so on. Novagen claim 'the first person perspective view has you ducking away from the screen in reaction', and, d'you know, they're actually right. An advert for the virtues of simplicity and pure, un-faffed-about-with gameplay if ever there was one. • *MATT BIELBY*

THE BOTTOM LINE

Simple but effective abstract 3D shoot-'em-up – possibly a tad overpriced, but bound to prove absorbing fun for adrenalin freaks.

73 PERCENT

ALPHA WAVES

Publisher: Infogrames
Author: Christophe De Dinechin
Price: £25.99
Release Date: Out now

'They have created a dream machine' whispers the packaging. 'A New Age experience' proclaims the manual. 'Something smells around here' gasps the reviewer. Yep, those good old Infogrames people have certainly gone to town on the blurb for *Alpha Waves*. No cringeingly arty quote is left unused – yes, it's even described as a passport to Virtual Reality! I don't know, I really don't.

Bouncing around the abstract world of *Alpha Waves* – a spiritual experience indeed.

Right, that's the cruel bit over with. Before we go any further I guess I'd better admit that I do actually like the game. Ignore the cover blurb though – the truth of the matter is that *Alpha Waves* is a kind of trampoline-cum-platform thing (if you can imagine that), set in a bizarre 3D world, and nothing to do with Virtual Reality at all. From the viewpoint of a camera constantly following your little hopper-thing's movement, you bounce up from one →

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platform to the next until the exit to that particular room is reached – then it's onto another, harder level. There are no actual baddies (as such) in it or anything, and because of that it's pretty difficult to get your mind around how best to describe the gameplay. Erm, it's odd. It's a sort of obstacle course. Oh, I give up. (You'll have to check it out for yourselves).

What I am sure of though is this – everything's set at a very sedate pace, and coupled with the garish colour schemes (the French have really excelled themselves here) the overall effect of the game is actually meant to alter the frequency of your brain waves, inducing varying degrees of relaxation and contentment.

Sounds like a whiffy concept to you? Good, then I'm not alone. The thing is, the idea (cuckoo though it is) still holds a certain charm, and I defy anybody to actually dislike the game. But hey, Amiga software cost a fair old amount these days, and something really has to be spectacular to make its mark. And *Alpha Waves* isn't. • *MARK RAMSHAW*

THE BOTTOM LINE

A charming piece of French fluff. Great to come back to, but far from compulsive (and by no means essential).

60 PERCENT

HEART OF THE DRAGON

Publisher: Avatar Consulting
Price: £25.99
Author: Roger Uzun
Release: Out now

If pushed to sum up *Heart Of The Dragon* in one sentence, then I guess I would say something like, 'Well, it's very American isn't it?' Let me explain myself. Who but the Americans would stick together a simplistic adventuring game (sort of like *Obitus* several steps down the evolutionary ladder) and a one-or-two player martial arts beat-'em-up, then envelope the whole thing in technical excellence and some ridiculous bragging ('featuring Anatomation for anatomically true animation effects' etc)? There's a lot of pseudo-technical guff ('my game's got faster frame animation than your game!') on the back of the box, and it really is a load of old cobblers.

Actually that's probably being a bit too harsh. Although the adventure sequences really are quite naff (despite the 4096 colours apparently used!), the music has a cinematic quality, and visually the fight sequences are fairly appealing. No, it's in the actual attention to playability that *Dragon* (like many martial arts games before it) falls down. Okay, so there are 192 colours this time, pleasing backdrops, and splendid animation of two completely different characters (Tommy Lee fights, while Master Chi levitates and fires 'psionic' bolts at the bad guys), but what's really missing is any feel to the thing. It just a case of wiggling the joystick a bit to execute a few moves, in the vague hope that they will somehow combine into the correct way to execute your opponent.

Tommy Lee and Master Chi battle against a Rock Man, his (ahem) 'weapon' and some very (very) dodgy gameplay.

The main selling point of the game seems to be that you'll be knocked over by the graphics, and when that quite conspicuously fails to be the case it really doesn't leave much left for it to stand on. Certainly the fights with the various different baddies are nothing to write home about (though Rock Men's hilariously obscene 'weapons' have to be worth a few extra points!) and once you've discovered just how minimal the fantasy aspect is you'll soon be ready to pack up and go home. A good laugh for ten minutes maybe (get your friends round to check out those Rock Men!), but there's no way anybody should actually go out of their way to play this (and certainly no way they should blow this amount of money on the blooming thing). Sorry Avatar, come back when you can add technical effects to a game, rather than vice versa. • *MARK RAMSHAW*

THE BOTTOM LINE

A wildly average game, which overdoses ludicrously on technical spec, but seems to lack that certain something (ie any gameplay whatsoever).

41 PERCENT

MERCS

Publisher: US Gold
Price: £24.99
Authors: Tiertex
Release: Out now

The latest in USG's long line of CapCom coin-op conversions, *Mercs* is a scrolling shoot-'em-up in the *Commando* tradition, but with all the usual trappings of a modern slaughterfest (ie power-ups and big end-of-level baddies). It scrolls in five directions (that is, all the usual compass-point ones except down and the downward diagonals), and pits the player (or players in two-player mode) against all the standard cannon-fodder grunts and hardware that you find in games of this ilk.

So what makes *Mercs* different from all the rest? Well, for one thing there's the rather tacky animation. In 1991, full-price games really ought to be beyond the stage of having characters glide across the landscape with their leg movements bearing no relation to the distance they actually travel. For another thing there are the really sloppy bugs in the continue system. The game offers you a ten second countdown continue option after you use up your last credit, even though you can't actually continue any more! This clearly isn't particularly important, but it is infuriating. I can't see any reason for it at all.

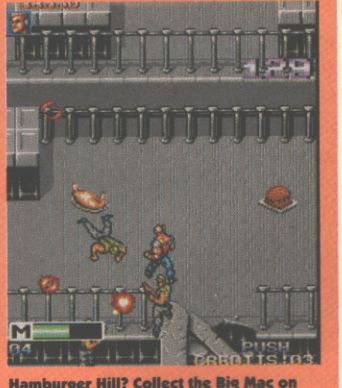
So what are the good points? Well, *Mercs*' most innovative feature is the narrow screen, which has two big black blocks down the sides in order to keep the playing area the same shape as the arcade version. This is actually surprisingly successful – Tiertex have resisted the temptation to fill up the space with decorations, and it's made the game feel very much like its coin-op counterpart, at least visually.

Apart from the aforementioned niggles, *Mercs* is a perfectly respectable conversion, but it suffers from the common problem of being a totally uninspiring game in the first place. It goes without saying that if you loved the original it'll be exactly what you want, so I won't bother saying that, and will instead note that it's another competent *Commando* clone, tough enough to provide a fair amount of zapping before you beat it, and one of the nicest-looking games of its kind. Only you know if that's what you want to spend £25 on. • *STUART CAMPBELL*

Revealed: the absolute end of the game.

Handy cases contain (mm) new guns etc.

Giant helicopter gunship is typical of the end of level baddies. Big and, erm, bad.


Hamburger Hill? Collect the Big Mac on the left for lots of lovely extra energy.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Yet another production-line coin-op blaster, but what it does, it generally does pretty well. A well-converted but very average game.

64 PERCENT

JAHANGIR KAHN'S WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP SQUASH

At last! A decent sports sim that's got nothing to with footie!

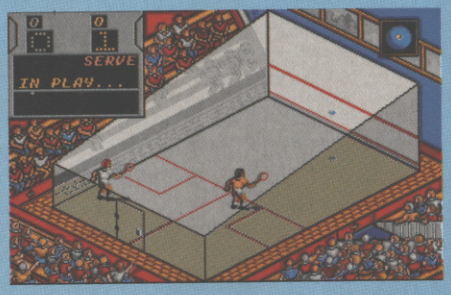
Publisher: Krisalis
Price: £25.53
Authors: Andy Ware, Simeon Pashley, Shaun Hollingsworth (Programming); Neil Adamson, Dave Colledge (Graphics); Matt Furniss (Music)
Release: Out now

How ironic to find a sport which requires so much physical effort simulated in a medium which requires so little. Home computer squash has been around since the days of those simplistic hand-held units – it was fun then and it's no less enjoyable in its new form.

The world championship in *Jahangir Khan's World Championship Squash* is only one half of the story. It's advisable to play the Club Tournament option and attempt to win the league before taking on the world's finest. It takes a little while to get to grips with the perspective, not to mention the standard control mode (the simplified version is a little too simplistic for its own good), but then it's simply a matter of reacting fast enough to enjoy high-speed rallies punctuated by a devious soft shot or nine. And right smashing it feels too.

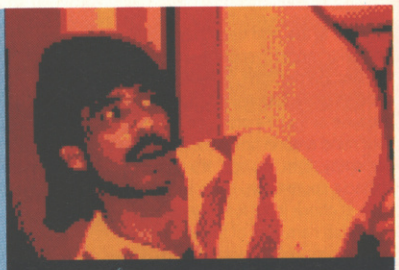
Unsurprisingly, *Jahangir's Squash* is best enjoyed when playing against a second human-controlled player. Even so, the computer-controlled opponent does play a believable and challenging game. And, just like the great man himself, his computer squash plays by the rules.

There's nothing actually wrong with *Jahangir's Squash*. Well, unless you object to the lack of female players or other International Tournaments so you can mimic Jahangir's uncanny success, that is. What *Jahangir's Squash* does it does very well and as such it offers a decent, viable alternative to the teaming mass of football simulations available. I mean, what else is there to be done with squash that could possibly make it any more interesting? Exactly. • *GARY PENN*



A typical slice of the action found in *Jahangir Khan's Squash*. What you can't see here is any of the many neat atmospheric touches evident throughout. The players stroll onto the court and spin a racquet before play to determine who will serve. They don't wipe their sweaty mitts on the walls of the court, but the winner does show his delight by falling to his knees. Audience attendance varies depending on the level of play. If you make the final of the World Championships the television cameras come out to watch too.

Statistics on every player and the facility to change the bounciness of the ball are just two of many useful options available from screens such as this one. An on-line HELP function tells you what's what, just in case all these icons prove too confusing.



JUST WHO IS JAHANGIR KHAN?

Far from being a distant relative of the tiger out of the Jungle Book, Jahangir Khan is in fact one of the world's most successful sportsmen and, apparently, the fittest. The 27-year-old started playing squash at the age of seven. At 15 he won the World Amateur Championship and two years later became the youngest ever Professional World Champion – a title he's won a further five times since. On the last weekend in April, the Karachi-born son of 1957's British Squash Champion Rossan Khan won his 10th consecutive British Open title. As well as winning every squash title in the world, Jahangir played in over 500 International matches in a six-year span without defeat. It won't come as any great surprise to learn that apparently literally translated his name means 'conqueror of the world'.

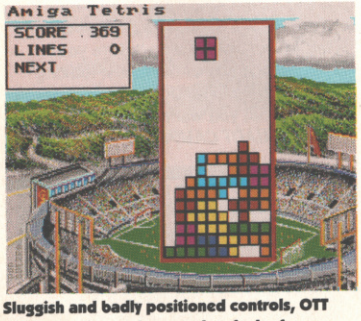
THE BOTTOM LINE

At least it's not another footie game. Polished and playable but far from outstanding. It's as simple as that.

70 PERCENT

TETRIS

Publisher: Infogrames
Price: £19.99
Authors: John Jones-Steele, Kevin Seghetti (programming); Dan Guerra,Jody Sather (graphics); Ed Bogas (music)
Release: Out now



Sluggish and badly positioned controls, OTT disk accessing and a complete lack of user-friendliness ruin yet another *Tetris* game.

Hey! *Tetris*! One of the best games in the world – the only problem being that the original Mirrorsoft version was completely and utterly useless, saved only by the unspoilable basic *Tetris* gameplay. Now it's been done again by Infogrames – a perfect chance to put all the wrongs right and use the power of the machine to produce what could be, quite literally, one of the best games there's ever been. I mean, it's brilliant on the Game Boy, it's brilliant on the Spectrum, it's brilliant in the arcades, it's brilliant in the Public Domain, it's one of the simplest games invented – surely just the laws of probability forbid it being buggered-up twice? Don't they?

You know what's coming, don't you? It defies belief, it really does, but this *Tetris* is another disaster. What is it about *Tetris* that turns Amiga programmers into inept halfwits? Like I said, it's hard to mess up the basic *Tetris* gameplay, but the ridiculous keyboard layout on this version comes very close to it. There's no joystick control option, so it's impossibly awkward to ever really get to grips with, and the graphics and sound aren't anything to write home about (to put it mildly). You can change the speed and put obstacles on the screen to make things tougher, which would be good if the game was playable in the first place, but that's just about all it's got going for it. That and the pretty backdrops which you can change during the game, I guess. If you've got amazing powers of lateral concentration, you *will* be able to play *Tetris* with this program, but it's still only a tenth as good as some of the PD versions that cost a tenth of the price, and that alone makes it worthless. Don't even think about it.• *STUART CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE

Staggeringly enough, it's another *Tetris* cock-up. I'm speechless, I really am. And asking 20 quid for a *Tetris* game is a bit of a joke.

29 PERCENT

SHADOW DANCER

Publisher: US Gold
Price: £25.99
Author: Images
Release: Out now

To be fair, there's not much that can be done to a sideways scrolling ninja-'em-up to make it that much different to the 300 billion other sideways scrolling ninja-'em-ups around. Apart, of course, from giving the main character a pet dog and calling the game *Shadow Dancer* – it's a wonder no-one thought of it before, really. US Gold certainly thought it was a splendid idea – especially as some coin-up person seemed to have done all the hard work already, meaning they merely had to nip down to Weston-Super-Mare, have a quick go on the arcade game, and then go home and write a conversion.

So how's it worked? Well, it has to be said, the look and feel of the original →

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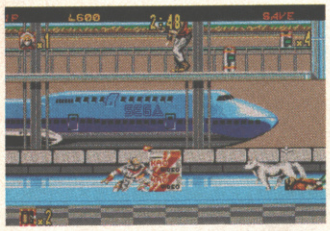


Our ninja hero ducks behind that handy box of videos, while his faithful wolf does away with the bad guys. What a coward.

has come through perfectly. Which is all very well if you ignore the fact that there wasn't all that much look and feel in the first place – if you were to take a close look at the original, and more worryingly this computer version, you'd soon realise just how thin the gameplay really is. It's all sprites and background and not very much to do at all.

In fact, I can just about describe the gameplay in one sentence: you have to walk along some scrolling landscapes killing baddies with (unlimited) shurikens and your sword. The unusual bit is that you've got this pet dog who follows you about and at appropriate moments leaps on unsuspecting baddies and either kills them or holds them down. Very useful he is too – at least until he gets beaten up just that little bit too much, at which point he and goes off and whimpers in a corner. And that's just about it in the 'unusual bits' category, I'm afraid.

As for the 'but is it any good?' part, well, I'm a bit unsure about what to say really. There's certainly a lot of it – four settings (airports and the like) and fifteen stages, including some bonus rounds (there's a great one where you have to shoot ninjas jumping off a building), end of level nasties and an assortment of different baddies. It's only when gameplay is mentioned that the word 'samey' seems to spring to mind, shout 'samey' and dance around the room singing 'samey, samey, samey'.

There are hardly any moves you can make (then again *Shadow Warriors* had piles and was still rubbish), the only extra weapons are two types of shurikens and although it's fun for a quite a while, long term interest seems rather unlikely. Certainly not the scrolling beat-'em-up to beat all beat-'em-ups, and, to be honest, not likely to make much of a mark at all. • *RICH PELLEY*

THE BOTTOM LINE

An excellent conversion of a rather boring arcade game. A lot better than some beat-em-ups perhaps, but still not really too much cop.

63 PERCENT

ZIRIAX

Publishers: The Whiz Kidz/The Software Business
Authors: Stefano Lecchi & Luca Stradiotto
Price: £24.99
Release: Out now

Hmm. The sharp eyed amongst you will have noticed that this one actually appears in The Bottom Line already – in fact, it was there last month. The reason for this is simple – our sister magazine Amiga Format reviewed it quite a few months ago, so we figured it must have been released around that time. How wrong can you be? In fact, *Ziriax* hasn't been on the shelves very long at all, which means Format jumped the gun a bit and the game's in fact ideal fodder for review this issue.

So what's *Ziriax* actually all about? Well, it's a horizontally scrolling shoot-'em-up isn't it, following as surely in the path of *R-Type* as it's possible to do. The opening seconds sees a very swish swirly scrolling credits effect – one that rather stunningly uses up the entire screen on our monitor – but unhappily things go downhill rather quickly after that. The in-game play area is

***Ziriax* may be *R-Type* of game, but it's a far from successful clone.**

of a much more normal size for a start, and the stuff that's presented there is pretty admittedly, but at the same time also pretty ordinary. It's also very hard – 'stupidly difficult', as The Bottom Line has it, and do you know, it's right. None of us can get anywhere very far at all.

Criticisms beyond this ludicrous difficulty and disappointing lack of originality are rather trickier to put your finger on however. It all scrolls very well, the graphics are quite complex and lovely looking, and if your weapons are singularly weedy and unimpressive then that's hardly cause to fling your arms up in horror. In actual fact, the chief argument against it is that so many far superior shoot-'em-ups are available at half the price (or less). There's the real *R-Type* for a start, but better than that are *Silkworm*, *Xenon* and (this is the clincher) *Xenon 2*. The idea that you could possibly want to buy *Ziriax* when that is out at £10.99 is just too much to get your mind around, really. • *MATT BIELBY*

THE BOTTOM LINE

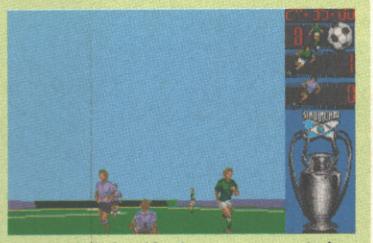
Ridiculously easy until the end-of-level baddies, whereupon it becomes nigh on impossible. *Ziriax* would be fine at a budget price, but asking anything more for it is at least a little bit cheeky.

54 PERCENT

I PLAY 3D SOCCER

Bizarre title, unusual perspective, different game style (same old sport).

Publisher: Simulmondo
Price: £25.99
Authors: Mario Bruscella and Ricky Cangini
Release: £25.99

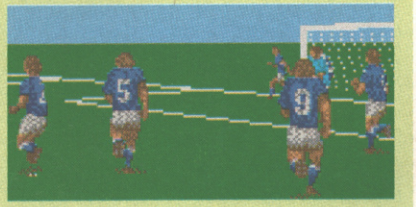


Another failed tackle. Come on, you can't sit down for the whole match!

If you were to walk up to Mr or Mrs Average in the street and announce '*I Play 3D Soccer*,' they'd no doubt reply 'Ah ha! You must be referring to that new footie game from Italian software house Simulmondo,' (either that or 'Blimey, what a willy. Go away!'). No, it's all right, you can come out from under the duvet – this isn't *just* another footie game. For starters, in this (the first in a presumably long line of '*I Play*' sports sims) you take control of just one player at a time, the rest of the team being computer controlled. And once you've read this next bit, which explains that instead of a boring old top view, it's all fancy first person perspective (so you actually view yourself running into the screen), you'll begin to see why we're looking at a rather different sort of computer football game, one that thinks of itself as much more a simulation than a standard soccer blast.

It may look like he's just soiled his pants, but he's actually waiting for the ball to come down.

And as a simulation, it does surprisingly well. The graphics are clear, fast and 3D, while the visual and tactical controls are pretty friendly to use. However, the main problem is it's far too much like the real thing for its own good. Just as in the real game (well, whenever I play it, anyway) you spend practically all your time chasing after the ball without actually coming into contact with it. The game has thought of this, and has an option where you can 'call' the ball, so it's passed to you as soon as your team has possession, but at the end of the day you still start to question whether you've actually contributed that much to the game at all. The split-screen two player option (play with or against another person) doesn't do itself justice for the same reason. And any ideas you may have about hogging the ball to make things more exciting for yourself go straight out of the window when you realise that this all too often leads to the unfortunate consequence that your team will lose. It's a bit of a shame really because the game is flawlessly executed – I've no other complaints apart from the lack of playability, and I'm perfectly willing to admit that it's possible that some (much better) footballers than I am may have more success with it. Nice idea, shame about the fact that it doesn't quite work. • *RICH PELLEY*



Another goal saved, so the chase is on to recover the ball before it goes out of play.

THE BOTTOM LINE

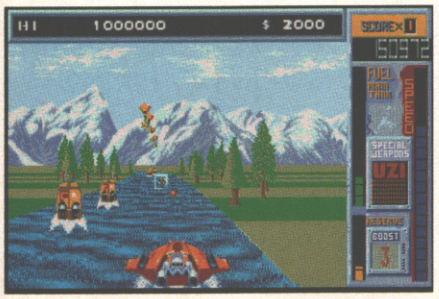
A great new concept in game play, but it doesn't quite lend itself to football. Regrettably most of the 'old type' of footie game seem a lot more fun.

58 PERCENT

HYDRA

Publisher: Domark
Authors: Ice Software
Price: £24.99
Release: Out now

I can't claim to know exactly how this works, but let's assume for a minute that when a software house ties up a



'*Roadblasters* in boats' is the best way to describe *Hydra*. Unfortunately, the gameplay sinks without trace.

potentially lucrative licensing deal with a coin-op firm, part of the deal has it that they're forced to take some real duffers along with the good stuff. Domark's set up with Atari/Tengen seems to be a perfect illustration of that – for every *Klax* or *Planet Of The Robot Monsters* there's a *Skull And Crossbones* or a *Hydra*. Yes, this is dreadful, easily down to the standards of last month's hopeless pirate hack'n'slash game.

So, *Hydra*. The arcade machine was a not-particularly-well-received *Roadblasters* clone, the twist being that it told the story of a water-based DHL-style delivery firm rather than any road-based action, allowing for lots of speedboats, mines and so on. Not a particularly promising start – even converted perfectly it's the sort of game that would seriously struggle to justify anything like a 25 quid price tag – but its simplicity could conceivably make for a half-way fun home conversion. (It would make a change from seeing the Amiga struggling to emulate the latest state-of-the-art dedicated coin-op hardware, that's for sure). I'd say the whole venture was doomed from the start as a full price proposition, but it could still make for a satisfying game at a reasonable price.

But it doesn't. This is a completely tragic attempt at a computer game. Its good points include an innovative and fairly successful attempt at representing moving water on screen in a different sort of way, and, erm, that's it. Its bad points take up rather more room – chalk down a total lack of a sense of speed, a total lack of a sense of excitement, some truly pitiful blocky, jerky graphics, gameplay so one-dimensional it can hardly be said to exist at all, and hopeless, unresponsive controls for starters. Sorry, but you're wasting my time, Domark. • *STUART CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE

Sub-budget quality at a price that's all wrong. In fact, it's no better than *Speedboat Assassins*, an 18-month old 16-Blitz game that was only £4.99.

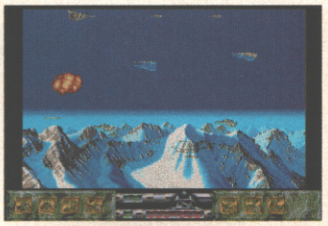
37 PERCENT

WHITE SHARKS

Publisher: Demonware
Authors: Jurgen Hauser
Price: £24.99
Release Date: Out now

White Sharks? The only White Shark I know is John Jeffries, the Scottish international rugby player. Surely this can't be a game about him?

Well, no, it isn't, but it would probably make for a far more interesting game if it was, because this is just another horizontally-scrolling shoot-'em-up. This one's big claim to being different is a completely unique weapon customising system which allows the player up to 37 million different weapon combinations, as well as allegedly having 'near-photographic graphics and hi-fi quality sound'. Hmm. So what does it all mean in practice? Well, the weapon customising screen is a bit gimmicky, not to mention something that few serious arcade freaks will ever want to bother with before getting down to the action. (This isn't a flight sim, after all). As for the graphics, they are strikingly lovely, if a little bit small, while the sound is perhaps best described as 'alright'. Gameplay-wise things are very ordinary indeed – your craft is rather over-sensitive to the controls and the whole thing seems a little too fast to be interesting. Nothing remains on screen for



Beautiful graphics, frenetic action, but nothing very interesting underneath.

long enough to make any sort of an impression on you. By the time I reached the second level (where the graphics are a lot less remarkable), I'd almost totally lost the will to continue, especially as the game becomes irritatingly hard in a fairly tedious sort of a way (ie lots of aliens and narrow manoeuvring space taking the place of any decent ideas), and although the graphics do improve again after Level Two, you're unlikely to really care one way or the other whether you get to see them. While it's all competently done, *White Sharks* is a game without a heart, and as such I can't really recommend it to anyone other than frame-rate train-spotters.• *STUART CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE

Stultifyingly average shoot-'em-up that's so bog-standard I now can't remember anything much about it at all. Beautiful graphics, completely wasted.

53 PERCENT

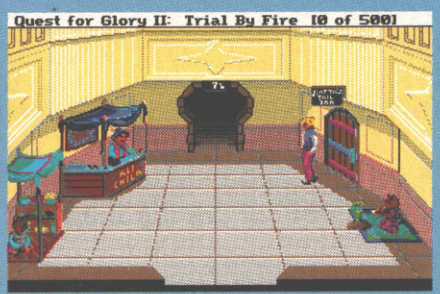
Sierra slip further behind Lucasfilm and Delphine in the race for adventuring perfection.

QUEST FOR GLORY II

Publisher: Sierra
Authors: Lori and Corey Cole
Price: £40.85
Release Date: Out now

Can we talk? Most Amiga owners probably know by now what the standard set-up for a Sierra game is, but for the benefit of those who don't, Sierra produce huge graphic adventure games, invariably on multiple disks, with rather primitive parser and graphics systems (when compared to, say, any of the Lucasfilm or Delphine games), which nonetheless sell in huge numbers (the prequel to this one sold over 130,000 copies in its first year of release) and are huge cult hits with a group of people who wait almost religiously for each new game to arrive then spend several months of their lives playing it until they complete it. This particular game is actually the second in the '*Hero's Quest*' series, the name having been changed after some legal problems with the makers of the well-known fantasy role-playing board game of the same name.

Hand-to-hand combat is treated in a role-playing style. Unfortunately, it doesn't really help the game any.



Pseudo-3D and second-rate graphics are just some of the delights on show.

And it's awful. Now, before I explain that statement, I have to qualify it by saying that if you already love Sierra games, you'll probably like *Quest For Glory II – Trial By Fire* just as much as all the others. But if you've never played one before and you want to know how good an Amiga game this is for 40 quid, you deserve to be warned.

Firstly, it comes on eight – yes eight! – disks. These access interminably, to the extent that moving between locations very often takes over a minute. They also have to be swapped with horrific frequency – on one particularly memorable occasion I was trailing through a maze (wow, talk about the pinnacle of imagination, a maze in an adventure game!) and took one of the exits, only to be asked to swap disks. This I did, and a mere 90 seconds or so later I was back in the game, only to find I'd walked straight into a dead-end single location, which I obviously had to then turn back out of. Time to swap disks again, make another cup of tea, ring up a friend, etc...

Talking of the maze, your character is animated in 3D as he travels through it, to a graphic standard which almost (but not quite) reaches the dizzy heights of *3D Monster Maze* on the ZX81. (I'm not joking). Which brings me to the

The desert is no place for the weak. Look out, he's behind you!

graphics. I'm sorry, but this just won't do. In 1991 I expect something a little better than a half-hearted imitation of a Commodore 64 on a bad day. Sadly though, that's about the nicest thing I can find to say about the visuals on display here. As for the command parser, well let's be really really generous and call it unfriendly and clumsy. (I'd probably get arrested if I told you what I actually think of it).

This is probably the most incompetently designed and put-together Amiga game I've seen in my life, and if it's the kind of thing that you get fun out of, I'd wish you the best of luck but suggest that you find some real people to talk to. Before it's too late. • *STUART CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE

I don't have nearly enough space to tell you all the things that are wrong with this game. It costs 41 pounds. Think what else you could do with 41 pounds. Then do it.

23 PERCENT

BUDGETS

Plenty of these games were full price once upon a time, though equally you'll find some original budgets here too. The £7.99-£10.99 Amiga market is ploughing ahead at full speed at the moment – we're finding it a struggle just to keep up!

PLATOON

Publisher: The Hit Squad
Price: £7.99
Release Date: Out now

Ah, *Platoon*. I remember it well. Ocean's game of the movie was well-received on its first release in 1988 for its atmospheric feel and tough, varied gameplay, and those qualities still stand it in good stead today. The graphics and

The quick and the dead – in *Platoon*.

sound are perhaps a little basic by current standards, but there's plenty of gameplay in here, from the arcade-adventure and mapping of the early levels to the 3D maze *Op-Wolf*-clone sections later on. There's a real tension to the game, and you find yourself jumping at the slightest sound. It's very playable, though, and the sectionalised format makes it addictive, as each section is just short enough that you always feel you'll complete it (next time), but hard enough that you rarely do. Give it a try – I doubt you'll be disappointed. • *STUART CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE

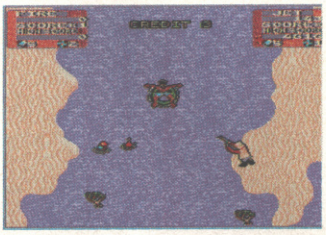
One of the better games in this month's batch of re-releases, and not of a game type that there's many of on the Amiga. Well worth getting.

73 PERCENT

TOOBIN'

Publisher: Respray
Price: £7.99
Release Date: Out now

Full-price release, at least one compilation, and now on a budget tag are just some of the ways in which you could own a copy of Tengen's curious game of inner-tube river riding, *Toobin'*. But would you actually want to? Well, no, not if you're me, anyway. *Toobin'* was a very strange arcade game when it came out, and this is a very close-looking copy of it, but it's got a control system that knocks any ideas of playability right out of the window. The joystick seems to work in an 'upside-down' manner, your player occasionally refuses to respond to commands for quite lengthy periods for no obvious reason, and you don't have any feeling of being able to do much to avoid the obstacles in your way. It really has outlived its shelf date by quite some time. Don't be taken for a rocky ride – give it a miss. • *STUART CAMPBELL*



Rad dudes and chillin' toobs.

THE BOTTOM LINE

In today's ever-more-competitive budget market, you can do a lot better than this for your £8. Spend your money on something like *IK+* instead.

39 PERCENT

THE JUNGLE BOOK

Publisher: Monkey Business
Price: £7.99
Release Date: Out now

I had quite wonderful childhood memories of this film, until they got bulldozed by this turgid piece of software.

The bare necessities of gameplay.

Let's be fair though – I guess it's not a complete disaster. It's presented as if it were a film, the audience lined up along the bottom of the screen. Lose a life, and one of them visibly falls asleep. A cute idea (sadly one of the few). Ah, yes, the game itself. This is a poor flick-screen, arcade-adventure thing, with jungle animals making life that little bit harder. So where have they gone wrong? Well, everywhere. I don't think I saw a single exciting thing happen the whole time I was playing it – to be honest, it stinks. Just say no. You know it makes sense. • *MARK RAMSHAW*

THE BOTTOM LINE

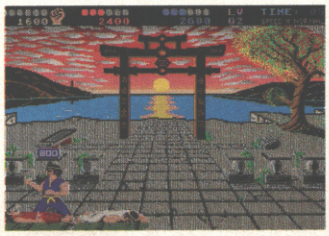
Awful in almost every way, it really is quite sad. A contender for worst film tie-in ever, no problem. Disney must be kicking themselves over this one.

32 PERCENT

IK+

Publisher: The Hit Squad
Price £7.99
Release Date Out now

This is No 60 in the Amiga Power All-Time Top 100, so you should know it's going to be brilliant. What you might not know is that it's probably the only beat-'em-up game you can't win by simply doing one move over and over, that it's got so many options and Nice Touches you'll still be finding things the 100th time you play it, that it's got a rare sense of humour, that the simple, beautifully-coloured graphics and thwacks-and-screams sound effects are brilliantly realistic and complement the action superbly, that the three-player design ensures that the mayhem never lets up, that the controls are natural and instinctive,or that this game is just so playable you won't put it down for days. No, you might not have known any of those things. But you do now. So buy it. • *STUART CAMPBELL*



Mass martial arts violence in *IK+*.

THE BOTTOM LINE

IK+ is quite simply the best beat-'em-up ever. It's just so pleasing in every way. I've never met anyone who didn't love it. Get it and you can love it too.

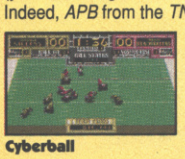
85 PERCENT

WINNING TEAM COMPILATION

Publisher: Domark
Price: £29.99
Release Date: Out now

Domark is developing into something of a compilations specialist, with this selection of Tengen coin-op conversions following hard on the heels of the *Heroes* (film licence games), *Wheels Of Fire* (driving games) and *TNT* (yet more Tengen coin-ops) collections. Indeed, *APB* from the *TNT* set makes another appearance here, which seems rather dubious to me, but there you are. Software houses, eh? Who can fathom them?

Escape From The Planet Of The Robot Monsters

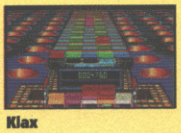


Cyberball

So what've we got here? Well, quite a wide range of styles. The best of these is undoubtedly *Klax* (a brilliant game with elements of *Tetris* but lots more depth and tons of playabilit), but *Escape From The Planet* etc is a goodie too, a pretty straightforward isometric runaround with great presentation, and action a-plenty.

A good start then, but sadly things start to slip quite badly soon after. *Cyberball* is a simplified American Football game with minor extra violence, and if that sounds like a tedious idea to you, I certainly won't argue the point. It's sluggish and unexciting in play, slightly tricky to get your mind around if you're not into American Football, and in practice essentially amounts to little more than a flashy, computerised version of stone-paper-scissors (gameplay consists of you chosing a move, then waiting to see if the opposition made a lucky guess about their counter move before you know if you've won or not). If you've got at least one hand and a friend, give that that a try instead.

APB



Klax

Vindicators is worse – a sort of overhead-view *Battlezone* game, alternately too fast or too slow, and exceptionally unrewarding to play. Very little skill is required, and all the levels look remarkably alike. The last game is *APB*, which is quite interesting and reasonable fun, but suffers from primitive graphics and ultimately repetitive gameplay. The control system is novel and there are nice touches of humour – competent without ever being brilliant seems like a fair description.

Vindicators

Common sense seems to suggest that most (indeed probably all) of these games will appear on Domark's budget label, and with this compilation priced at £30 the price per game means that unless you really want all five, you'd be better waiting and buying the ones you like individually. • *STUART CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE

Two great games, one reasonable one, and two duffers for £30 isn't really a very good deal these days. Wait a little while and save yourself some cash.

50 PERCENT

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KAMIKAZE

Publisher: Code Masters
Price: £7.99
Release Date: Out now

In which the Codies perform their old trick of rewriting an ancient arcade classic, just long enough after the official conversion to avoid messy lawsuits and the like. This time it's *Flying Shark* that gets the treatment, but with an added twist in that each level has a particular mission to complete. This usually takes the form of having some manner of installation to destroy, a feat which you accomplish by, uh, crashing your plane into it. It's a bit of a nihilistic approach, true, but it seems to do the trick, so who am I to question the wisdom of it?

So, analysis time. The inescapable fact of the matter is that this game is so similar to *Flying Shark* the two must have been separated at birth. The scenery, the enemies, the gameplay, all are as carbon copies of the arcade machine.

This isn't necessarily a bad thing, as the coin-op was something of a classic, but (sadly) it's an inferior clone. It's too difficult in a finicky kind of way, and as there's no spark to it, any initial addictiveness quickly gives way to frustration and boredom.

I couldn't say I actually hate *Kamikaze*, but it's averageness raised to an art form. If you really must have another game of this type though, then this is as good as any at the price. Just don't say I sent you. • *STUART CAMPBELL*

Possibly the world's first scrolling shoot-'em-up where part of your task involves deliberately crashing into things!

THE BOTTOM LINE

A perfectly competent scrolling shoot-'em-up of slightly obvious origins, but with no real life about it at all. Fine if you don't own *Flying Shark*.

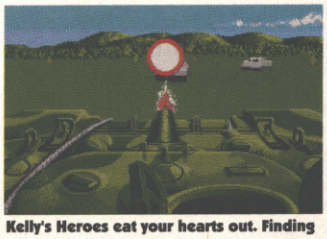
57 PERCENT

SHERMAN M4

Publisher: Action Sixteen
Price: £7.99
Release Date: Out now

Okay, so the name kind of gives the game away. It's a tank game. Of course, this being the '90s nobody would dare release a simple *Battlezone* clone. Nope, what we get with *M4* is a complicated *Battlezone* clone – lots of your obligatory solid 3D vectors, a fair bit of bolt-on strategy, and a rather massive dollop of shooting. The programmers have obviously realised that tank sims are normally boring as hell, so they've plumped here for an odd sort of halfway-house between a shoot-'em-up and a strategy thang.

So how well does it work? Well, just fine for the most part, though you do get a feeling of compromise. Each time I've played it I've found myself neglecting the strategy elements after precious few minutes, and getting down to some good old fashioned tank bashing instead. It's not that the strategy elements are badly done



Kelly's Heroes eat your hearts out. Finding a place to park is never a problem when you drive a *Sherman M4*.

particularly, but they do come across as a bit of an afterthought, stuck in there to make up for the significant shortcomings in the action department.

Still, I shouldn't whinge too much. For the money it certainly offers a sizeable amount of playing time, and I do enjoy playing it in a half-hearted sort of a way, though I'd still choose *Battlezone* any day of the week. • *MARK RAMSHAW*

THE BOTTOM LINE

Caught between two stools, *M4* would have benefited from concentrating more on a single style. An enjoyable romp nonetheless.

72 PERCENT

MIAMI CHASE

Publisher: Code Masters
Price: £7.99
Release Date: Out now

The Codesters are pinning a fair amount of faith on this game, trumpeting it as their first 2-disk game with quotes on the box describing it as 'without doubt Code Masters best game yet'. The plot, however, is far from inspirational, and the inlay is pathetic, furnishing the player with next to no information at all.

Doesn't sound too good then does it? So I'm pleased beyond measure to be able to report that *Miami Chase* is actually a bona fide, grade A, first-class corker of a

They don't come any simpler, faster or more fun than *Miami Chase*.

game. The tone is set with a very lengthy and impressive intro sequence, and the game itself (while undeniably simple to the point of being laughable) is one of the most stylishly put-together I've seen in quite some time. The whole of the gameplay consists of driving around some city streets (viewed from overhead) and taking out the bad guys by shooting and ramming them off the road, but the graphics are so elegant and the scrolling so smooth that it's a joy to play, and a wonderfully single-minded experience.

It's a gorgeously simple game, with aesthetics that any full-price software house would be proud of, and gameplay that any arcade junkie will love. The one doubt is over lastability, with only five levels, but hey, what do you want for eight quid – blood? • *STUART CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE

A mad fun classic, which succeeds because of simplicity and sheer professionalism. It would be criminal to miss it. (So don't.)

82 PERCENT

NORTH AND SOUTH

Publisher: Action Sixteen
Price: £7.99
Release Date: Out now

Charge! The Confederates launch a head-on attack over the bridge.

I just had to review this one because, you see, I think it's brill. It's one of my favourites in fact – a game I was actually quite keen to see included in our All-Time Top 100 Games supplement (but failed to mention at the time for fear that everyone would laugh at me). As it turns out, Gary quite likes it too, so perhaps we could have slipped it past everyone else after all.

Apparently based on a comic strip (westerns are still big news in France), *North And South* sees you playing whichever side you fancy in the American Civil War. The idea is to take control of all the territory on the board game-style map of the USA you work from. This of course leads to battles.

Ah yes, the battles. These are ludicrously good fun – lots of tiny soldiers running forward to take pot shots at each other, cavalry charging headlong down ravines, cannons desperately trying to get a bead on each other, reinforcements arriving at the crucial moment and so on.

And that's it really – the low level of strategy, gorgeous sound, silly interludes (the race against time through the fort, for instance) and so on all add to it, but it's the battles that make the game. (Now who wants another go?) • *MATT BIELBY*

THE BOTTOM LINE

Hilarious French slant on the simplest sort of strategy game. It really is a joy to play. Odd and (in the two player mode) simply unmissable.

83 PERCENT

Infocom were the undisputed champions of the text adventure. Now their old classics have

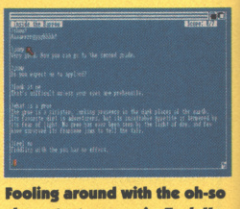
Infocom: like 'em, loath 'em, watch 'em go bust (they did, sadly, several years ago) but their adventures refuse to go away. Nor should they. Bereft of graphics but written with a parser that's still far more sophisticated than anything anyone's tried to write since, and possessed of the most intelligent humour you'll ever come across using a keyboard, you could really do worse than try out one of these recent re-releases.

ZORK II

Publisher: Infocom/ Virgin
Price: £9.99
Release Date: Out now

The best of the Zork series (which began with *Zork*, ended with *Zork III* and was then supplemented by a beginner's Zork 0) is set in the underground ruins of the ancient Empire in a region once controlled by the Wizard of Frobozz. Old Wiz has been sent into exile by Lord Dimwit Flathead the Excessive. He's also left a lot of tricks (and traps) lying around for you to discover and survive. Fortunately, many of the puzzles stand alone, allowing you to sizzle your synapses over several brain strainers at once.

The environment is completely surreal: from a sleeping troll pointlessly guarding an ancient toll bridge (and a corresponding shortage of coins with which to pay the pain in the neck) to the ice room to which you have to lead a dragon whose over-riding urge is to make fried fast food out of foolish adventurers. Other characters include a pesky thief who wasn't making much of a living until you arrived and now he's giving it everything he's got (off the back of a lorry) and the Grue. (Grue are not really characters, actually. They're more like personified Game Over messages.) Grue live in the dark. Do not venture into the dark or Grue will eat you. You have been warned. With a score that takes into account the number of moves you make – not to mention particularly stupid acts like getting yourself killed – it's guaranteed to have you wiping spittle off your chin within days. It's a beauty. – *81 Percent.*



Fooling around with the oh-so clever text parser in *Zork II*.

SUPER GRAND PRIX

Publisher: Code Masters
Price: £6.99
Release Date: Out now

***Indy 500* was never like this. Will the tank (erm) trample the opposition?**

This is an improved version of the popular 8-bit Codies title *Grand Prix Simulator 2*, and is aimed at filling a currently vacant gap in the Amiga *Super Sprint*-clone market. While there have been several games released in that field recently (*Supercars 2* and *Super Off-Road Racer* most prominently), they've concentrated on other aspects of the overhead-view-racing game. *Super Grand Prix* is different. It's much more of a straight copy, with lots of no-nonsense racing around simple one-screen tracks. To spice it all up though it also includes several novel optional features. Fancy racing around on a motorbike or in a racing car, in a dragster, a JCB digger, a Chieftain tank, or even a Sinclair C5? Then you can – up to four players are catered for, with action replays for the egotists.

That's about it for features – all you need to know now is how well *SGP* plays, and luckily the answer is 'pretty groovily, really'. The importance of the four-player mode shouldn't be underestimated either, as it makes the game much more of a social experience. What I'm trying to say here is that it's the best pure *Super Sprint* yet, and it's a bargain too. Give it a buy. • *STUART CAMPBELL*

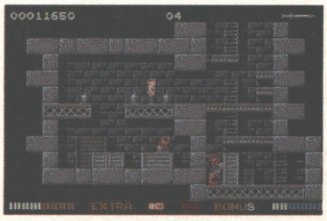
THE BOTTOM LINE
A wonderful exercise in arcade cloning. Excellent fun, tons of playability, loads of optional extras, silly price – what more could you ask for?
78 PERCENT

SWITCHBLADE

Publisher: Kixx
Price: £7.99
Release Date: Out now

This 1989 game garnered a whole heap of critical acclaim when it was first released. The gloomy, atmospheric graphics coupled with classic platforms-and-ladders gameplay made it popular with reviewers, and a substantial challenge kept players plugging away at it for an age. So did the people who didn't buy it miss out on something special?

Erm, not really. *Switchblade* is one of those games that just doesn't seem to stand the test of time. It's still beautifully



Into the *Switchblade* labyrinth, a grey world if ever there was one.

programmed, it's still challenging, but it's also (to me, anyway) ultimately boring. The graphic style doesn't change at all, right the way through the game, and the difficulty increases not by any subtle devilment, but simply by throwing more and tougher baddies at you. And that's another thing. Tougher baddies? Correct me if I'm wrong, but I thought this was a platform game, not *International* bloody *Karate*. When I kick a baddie I expect him to die, not to need another two maximum-strength kicks before he clears off. It makes the whole thing plain frustrating.

It's a shame, because the terrific atmosphere and novel exploration twists (rooms are only revealed when you enter them) are really nice. As it is though, it's a fun game, but something of a missed opportunity. • *STUART CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE
Fun to start off with, but rapidly gets irritating and fairly dull. Doesn't stand up to repeated playing and is showing its age somewhat.
70 PERCENT

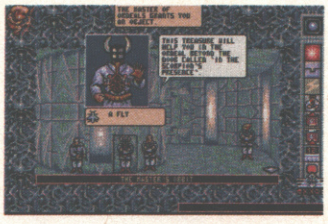
KULT

Publisher: Action Sixteen
Price: £7.99
Release Date: Out now

Well, there are people around here who like it, it has to be said (Amiga Format gave a Gold award in an early issue), but equally there are those who refer to it as, well, (might as well quote them direct) 'a pile of steaming jobbies.' Ahem. On the plus side you have to concede that yes, it's rather pretty and yes, it's rather big too, but then stacked up (rather heavily, I'd say) against it on the other side is the it's-incredibly-annoying factor. Ridiculously annoying – do one little thing wrong and that's the whole game cocked up good and proper.

So how does it work? Well, it's a rather pretty, comic book style (I mean those lovely French comics, not the Beano or whatever) graphic adventure, with an easy(ish) icon system allowing you to get quickly into the five tasks you're set before embarking on the adventure proper.

With the aid of the Amiga Format



Confused? You will be. Weird icons, tough problems and distinctly French graphics abound in *Kult*.

Screenplay Tips Book (nothing like a quick plug, is there?) I got a fair old way into it, but I know I'd still be struggling hopelessly if it was all left up to me.

I wouldn't say it was brilliant, but it is good, and certainly very atmospheric in a spooky French sort of a way. It's just not the sort of thing I could ever bring myself round to seriously play. • *MATT BIELBY*

THE BOTTOM LINE
Another wacko French adventure thing. Big, atmospheric and certainly value for money, though it takes a lot of patience to persevere.
73 PERCENT

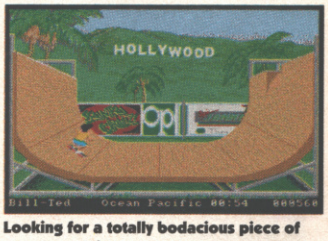
CALIFORNIA GAMES

Publisher: Kixx
Price: £7.99
Release Date: Out now

I guess you either like these sorts of games, or you don't. And I, erm, don't. Not at £25 anyway – at this price you can start to overlook their inherent slightness and enjoy them for what they are – silly, throwaway and fun.

So how does *California Games* work exactly? Well, it's a series of 'typical' Californian type events, ranging from surfing (possibly the best) to the rather tenuous foot bag bouncing, where an extremely dodgy looking geezer attempts to bounce a beanbag on, erm, his foot. Generally gameplay, which dates back years to an ancient C64 version, is of a fairly primitive learn-the-correct-joystick-movements-and-then-do-them-in-the-right-sequence sort – an improvement on the wagglers that prevailed at the time perhaps, but rather sad looking in 1991.

It's all rather jolly, and fun with a few of you gathered round the computer taking turns at each event, but the awkwardly animated graphics, limited nature of most of the games (the half-pipe skateboarding , the aforementioned surfing and the roller skating perhaps have most scope) and, especially, the ridiculous disk accessing time between games spoil it being worth serious consideration. • *MATT BIELBY*



Looking for a totally bodacious piece of excellence? (You probably won't find it in *California Games*).

THE BOTTOM LINE
Sounds a minor-league hoot, but the varying sub-games (average through to useless), dodgy graphics and ridiculous loading spoil the fun.
51 PERCENT

been re-released on budget, but is there still a market for graphics-free adventuring in '91?

ZORK III

Publisher: Infocom/ Virgin
Price: £9.99
Release Date: Out now

Also less well known as *The Dungeonmaster*, *Zork III* is not only the most complex (and largest) of the Zork tales but it qualifies as being among the most difficult games Infocom ever released. In it the main encounter is one with a shadowy version of yourself, slightly displaced in time. You have to get around yourself, so to speak, and contortions won't help.

Though all Infocom games use roughly the same parser, allowing detailed instructions to be typed in by the paragraph if necessary, *Zork III*'s is slightly more flexible than those of its predecessor. It has to be said though, it's perhaps not a wise choice for the neophyte Zorker unless you plan spending a few months off from real life. Only Gripe Department: though *Zorks II* and *III* are linked by plot (and geography), you can't take a *Zork II* saved game and start playing *Zork III* with it. Beware: this game contains Grue too! – *79 Percent.*

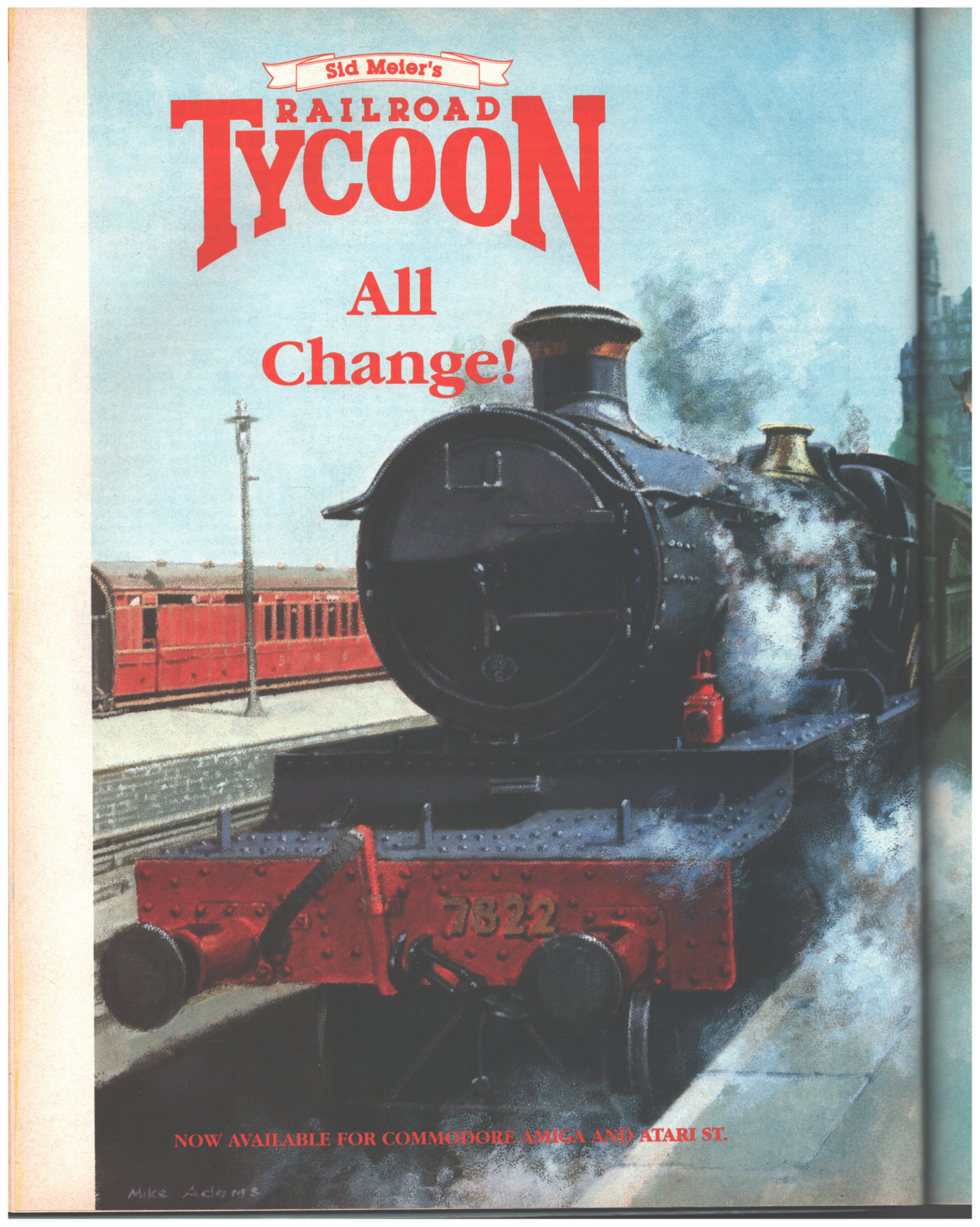
ENCHANTER

Publisher: Infocom/ Virgin
Price: £9.99
Release Date: Out now

This game was itself the first part of a trilogy which later included *Sorcerer* and *Spellbinder*. On visiting the wizard's guild, you discover that one of your colleagues has been kidnapped. The first item on the agenda is getting out of the guild. Guardian nymphs won't let you leave (but the place is about to be burned to the ground by an unstoppable and pyromaniacal foe) so you have to find a spell to teleport you into the vicinity of your captured colleague. And that's just for starters.

Though sharing much in common with games in the Zork series proper, *Enchanter* was different in as much as it allowed your character to thumb through a thaumaturgical tome and cast a small number of spells. And there aren't any Grue in it. (Actually, that may be an untruth – but then why should every game have a Grue warning?) It's an excellent first choice of a game: satisfyingly tough and yet funny at the same time. *Enchanter* really is quite unlike anything else there's ever been. – *83 Percent.*

• *SEAN MASTERSON*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WIN A JOB AT BULLFROG!

Yes, it's true – in a few months time you could find yourself working alongside Peter Molyneux and Co on games like 'Bob', Creation and Populous II, learning to program and eventually getting your very own project!

Bullfrog have a policy of taking on young, enthusiastic programmers and graphic artists, training them to work to the required standards ('I can teach anyone to program in two weeks,' claims boss Peter Molyneux) then giving them the chance to work on their own games, backed by the experience and help of the Bullfrog team. New places on the team don't come up all that often though, as you might imagine – the team has to be kept to a suitable, manageable size of eight or nine people, after all – so this really could be the chance of a lifetime!

COMPETITION

This is Sean Cooper...

Programmer 'Bob'/ Higher Functions

Sean is 20 and joined Bullfrog as a games tester through his Information Technology Education course (ITEC), though he's since gone on to become a programmer in his own right, having done the bulk of the work on *Flood* and all the actual programming on '*Bob.*' His biggest claim to fame though is that he's got through the first rounds of BBC1's The Clothes Show modelling competition (!) and will be appearing on TV in the final some time this summer. A new career beckons, perhaps?

...this is Alex Trowers

Games Tester/ Trainee Programmer & Graphic Artist

Alex is 19 and has been working at Bullfrog for seven months – ever since he met Sean (who he already knew from ITEC) on a bus, and learned that Bullfrog were on the look out for another programmer. He's been concentrating on playtesting to start with, while at the same time learning to program – he'll eventually get his own project. The *Powermonger* levels maps are his, for instance, as will be much of the puzzle design for '*Bob.*' He's obsessed by Paintball, live role playing and 'computers in general'.

...and this could be you!

Programmer 'Project X'

(Your name here) won a competition through Amiga Power magazine, earning himself a job as a programmer with Bullfrog. Skipping the Games Tester stage, he's currently working on a top secret project to be released some time during next year.

RULES & REGULATIONS

- **Remember, the closing date for this competition is July 31st 1991.**
- **The winner will be chosen by Bullfrog themselves – in the event that no entries seem good enough to deserve the first prize, no alternatives will be given.**
- **All games submitted for the purposes of this competition become the property of Amiga Power magazine.**

So what do I have to do?

Not surprisingly perhaps, this unusual sort of a prize demands an unusual sort of a competition. What you've got to do is write us a version of *Space Invaders* on the Amiga. Don't worry about the graphics too much – what matters is that you're original in what you do. The challenge is to take such an old, simple and established game style and do something interesting with it.

Peter Molyneux of Bullfrog has given the same challenge to two people he knows who he's taught the basics of programming – to have a chance in this competition you've got to come up with something at least as impressive as what they've managed to knock out.

That's it really – we're giving you just over two months to do it (until the 31st of July in fact) so there's no excuse for not doing a decent job.

Of course, this being an unusual sort of a competition, there are some unusual sort of rules...

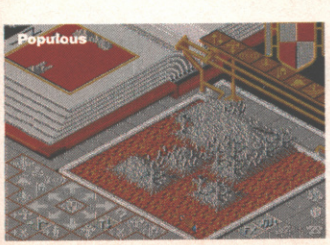
1) You'll have to be willing move down to the Guildford area and work in the Bullfrog offices with the rest of the team.

2) You will be taken on as a programmer – skipping the games tester stage that most new Bullfrogs go through – and after a three month trial period will be given your own project to work on. Salary will be arranged with Bullfrog depending on age, talent and experience.

3) There is no alternative first prize – if Peter Molyneux decides none of the entries are of sufficient standard he won't take anybody on. However, there are some second prizes. Electronic Arts, Bullfrog's publisher, has stumped up ten sets of Bullfrog games (*Populous*, *Flood* and Powermonger) for runners up, with copies of the *Powermonger WW1* disk and *Populous II* to be sent out on completion.

4) Send your game on disk, with whatever explanation it requires, to Win A Job At Bullfrog Competition, Amiga Power, 29 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW. Don't forget to add your name and address (of course!), and remember the closing date – it's July 31st 1991.

▼ This is the quality of game you could be working on – some of the most original ever seen.



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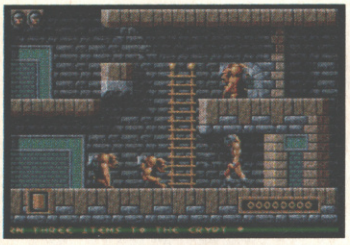
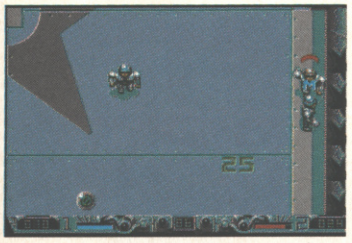


GODS Renegade



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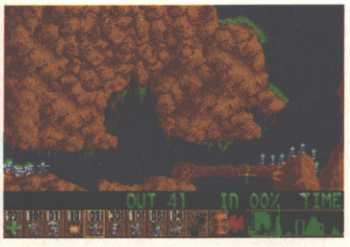

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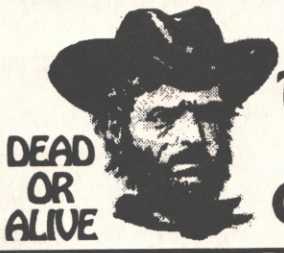

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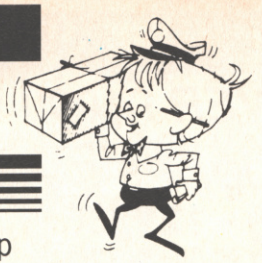

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THE AMAZING SPIDERMAN
Empire £24.99
Uppers – Old fashioned platform gameplay still holds up well. ***Downers*** – Tiny sprites and – let's face it – it all looks rather crap when you first see it. ***The Bottom Line*** – Fun, but do you really want to fork out 25 quid for what's basically a crumbly old 8-bit game? ★★

ANCIENT BATTLES
CCS £24.95

Uppers – Unusually colourful graphics for a wargame, reasonable game mechanics and compatibility with Rainbird's *UMS*. ***Downers*** – Poor cursor control; not terribly state-of-the-art. ***The Bottom Line*** – Fine if you like toy soldiers. ★★

ANTAGO
Art Of Dreams £19.95
Uppers – Cute and charming little *Othello/Checkers* hybrid. ***Downers*** – A bit twee; not much lasting interest. ***The Bottom Line*** – Only really comes alive in two player mode. ★

ARMOUR-GEDDON
Psygnosis £25.99

Uppers – Lots of tanks, lots of planes, lots of places to go. It's deep and wide and tall (and good-looking to boot). ***Downers*** – Takes a lot of self-discipline to play properly. ***The Bottom Line*** – A natural successor to *Carrier Command*, and – it has to be said – a worthy one too. ★★★★

ATF II
Digital Integration £24.99
Uppers – Good old-fashioned 3D fly-and-shoot game with the added attraction of solid vector graphics. ***Downers*** – It's no flight sim. ***The Bottom Line*** – Fun as far as it goes. ★★

ATOMIC ROBOKID
Activision £24.99
Uppers – Plenty of levels, plenty of action. ***Downers*** – Not particularly fast (and certainly not new!) ***The Bottom Line*** – Reasonable straightforward shoot-'em-up in the 'son of *R-Type*' vein. ★★

ATOMINO
Psygnosis £25.99

Uppers – Easy to pick up, with thousands of levels to keep you going. ***Downers*** – Can covalent bonding be fun? We're not sure. Rather samey; very tough; crap music. ***The Bottom Line*** – Similar to *Pipe Mania* in some ways – if you liked that, try this. ★★★

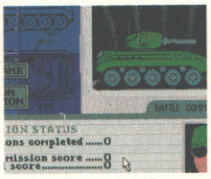
BACK TO THE FUTURE PART III
Image Works £24.99

Uppers – Variety, neat animation, some decent jokes. ***Downers*** – But film licences nearly always feel too thin to be worth 25 quid... ***The Bottom Line*** – ...and this one's no different. Fun but slight. ★★★

BADLANDS
Tengen (Domark) £19.99
Uppers – A close conversion... ***Downers*** – ...of a crap overhead-view arcade race game. ***The Bottom Line*** – So workmanlike its jeans hang over its arse. ★★

THE BARD'S TALE III - THIEF OF FATE
Electronic Arts £24.99
Uppers – A satisfying bout of monster bashing to appeal to the usual *Bard's Tale* mob. ***Downers*** – New ideas and fancy programming are sadly lacking. ***The Bottom Line*** – Monumentally unspectacular, but kinda nice all the same. ★★★

B.A.T.
Ubi Soft £29.99
Uppers – Intergalactic intrigue in a novel interactive comic book style. ***Downers*** – Perhaps a little too left-of-centre for some. ***The Bottom Line*** – Very different, and actually very good. ★★★

BATTLE COMMAND
Ocean £24.99

Uppers – Loads of missions, atmospheric solid 3D graphics (ie lots of green), plus a good mix of strategy and blasting. ***Downers*** – Takes a while to get into; some odd (and impossible to complete) missions. ***The Bottom Line*** – If you've got the self-discipline to persevere past an uninspiring start, this is a worthy follow-up to the classic *Carrier Command*. ★★★

BATTLEMASTER
PSS £29.99

Uppers – A tired fantasy/strategy plot given new lease of life by excellent graphics and oodles of playability. ***Downers*** – Arcade junkies need not apply, despite the abundance of genocidal mayhem. ***The Bottom Line*** – Try it – you may be surprised. ★★★

BETRAYAL
Rainbird £29.99
Uppers – Fantasy blended with strategy and some nice graphical touches offers an intriguing hybrid. ***Downers*** – The game really needs several human players to make it exciting. ***The Bottom Line*** – Once again Rainbird attempt something a little bit different. ★★★

BLOCK OUT
Rainbow Arts £19.99
Uppers – Initially similar to *Welltris*, but far more challenging due to the true use of 3D. ***Downers*** – If *Tetris* (and its ilk) made you scream, playing *Block Out* is not medically advisable. ***The Bottom Line*** – Compulsive. ★★★

BOTICS
Krisalis £19.99
Uppers – Nice sound; futuristic graphics. ***Downers*** – Absolutely dire *Pong*-style gameplay. ***The Bottom Line*** – Get out of here! ★

BRAT
Image Works £24.99

Uppers – Very pretty, very smooth, very challenging. ***Downers*** – ...and very, very irritating indeed, especially if you hate the central character. ***The Bottom Line*** – Okay if you play it with the sound off. ★★★

BREACH 2
Impressions £24.99
Uppers – Stick with it and you'll find an immensely rewarding space/strategy blast with loads of levels. ***Downers*** – Scrappy graphics and some awkward quirks will deter many. ***The Bottom Line*** – Loved *Laser Squad*? Then you'll probably take a shine to *Breach 2*. ★★

CABAL
Ocean £24.99
Uppers – Surprisingly enjoyable *Operation Wolf* varient. ***Downers*** – Kindergarten graphics and no game depth. ***The Bottom Line*** – Reasonable two-player blasting for an hour or three. ★★

CADAVER
Image Works £24.99
Uppers – Gorgeously atmospheric graphics; a good mix of puzzling and hacking. ***Downers*** – One or two irritating moments and it's all a bit lacking in the excitement department. ***The Bottom Line*** – A nice blend of 3D graphics and adventuring (but it's not a classic). ★★★

CAPTIVE
Mindscape £24.99
Uppers – Neat icon-control system enhances an atmospheric (and massive) exploration challenge. ***Downers*** – The game system is quite similar to *Dungeon Master*, so joystick freaks won't find much to enjoy here. ***The Bottom Line*** – A genuine Amiga classic. ★★★★

CARTHAGE
Psygnosis £24.99
Uppers – Excellent graphics and some nifty arcade sequences. ***Downers*** – But underneath it's a distinctly average strategy game. ***The Bottom Line*** – Despite appearances, not one for the joystick junkies out there. ★★★

CAR-VUP
Core Design £24.99
Uppers – As cute a game as you are ever likely to find, and with a perfectly balanced difficulty level too. ***Downers*** – It's pretty simple – more variety between the levels would've been nice. ***The Bottom Line*** – It might not push back the boundaries of Amiga leisure software, but it's a damn fine game. ★★★★

CASTLE MASTER
Incentive (Domark) £24.99
Uppers – Improved 3D Freescape system, and a new medieval environment in which to solve a dazzling array of puzzles. ***Downers*** – Not the prettiest game ever, and not really that different from the rest of the Freescape series. ***The Bottom Line*** – Great if you're a fan, others will wonder what all the fuss is about. ★★★★

CHAOS STRIKES BACK
Mirrorsoft £24.99
Uppers – Complex and ingenious puzzles; very user friendly; great sound. ***Downers*** – Slightly old fashioned looking. ***The Bottom Line*** – Engrossing role playing adventure using the *Dungeon Master* game system. ★★★★

CHASE HQ II
Ocean £24.99

Uppers – Well, it's not as disastrous as the first conversion. ***Downers*** – But still terminally average. It drives like a brick. ***The Bottom Line*** – It looks as tired as Miami Vice. ★★

CHUCK ROCK
Core Design £24.99

Uppers – Heaps of character with some innovation in the gameplay for once. ***Downers*** – A touch shallow and a touch easy. ***The Bottom Line*** – Pretty brilliant platformer, one of the Amiga's very best. ★★★★

CHUCK YEAGAR'S ADVANCED FLIGHT TRAINER 2.0
Electronic Arts £24.99
Uppers – A veritable army of planes to fly, with piles of options, missions and external views. ***Downers*** – A complete lack of speed, bad disk access and naff perspective put the dampers on the whole affair. ***The Bottom Line*** – Low flying flight sim – fails to stay with the competition. ★★★

CHIP'S CHALLENGE
US Gold £24.99
Uppers – Lots and lots of levels; typically well thought out console-style gameplay. ***Downers*** – Simplistic graphics; lack of depth. ***The Bottom Line*** – Good, but not the most characterful of puzzle games. ★★★

Welcome to The Bottom Line – Amiga Power's constantly updated mini reviews section covering the most important games released over the last year. This month it's goodbye to oldies like *Warhead*, *Sherman M4* and others, and a big hello to 23 (23!) new games hand-picked from the best we reviewed last issue. Each time round we'll go through a similar updating process, making for a handy, at-a-glance guide to just about everything you're ever likely to buy. Don't take all the prices we quote too literally though – VAT has recently mucked things up a treat. Don't look for a complicated scoring system either – everything's rated out of a simple five stars.

★★★★★ Exceptional
★★★★★ Nearly there
★★★★ Very good
★★★ Has its moments
★★ Flawed
★ Dire

THE BOTTOM LINE

CODENAME: ICEMAN
Sierra £34.99
Uppers – Good if you've always fancied a submarine simulator bolted onto Sierra's usual graphic adventure engine. ***Downers*** – Five disks of slow-motion action. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not Sierra's best, and a poor introduction to their game style. ★★

THE COLONEL'S BEQUEST
Sierra £34.99
Uppers – Mildly intriguing whodunit, with that ever so familiar Sierra style of presentation. ***Downers*** – Terrible graphics, hours of tedium. ***The Bottom Line*** – Overpriced and over here. ★★

COMBO RACER
Gremlin £19.99
Uppers – Ultra-fast 3D and a track designer up the longevity of the game. ***Downers*** – Naff sound and a totally ridiculous two-player option. ***The Bottom Line*** – Lacks sparkle, but it's far from being a disaster. ★★

COMMANDO
Elite £19.99
Uppers – Lovingly recreated coin-op blast-'em scroller. ***Downers*** – As fashionable as an anorak. ***The Bottom Line*** – Classic stuff. ★★★

CRIME WAVE
US Gold £24.95

Uppers – Gore galore; the numerous video interludes spice it up a bit. ***Downers*** – The actual game is dull in the extreme, and the waiting between levels is monstrous. ***The Bottom Line*** – A bog-standard blast-'em-up with knobs on. ★

CYBERBALL
Tengen (Domark) £19.99
Uppers – An excellent conversion of an utterly bizarre coin-op. ***Downers*** – Not a lot of long-term interest; can be difficult to get into. ***The Bottom Line*** – Novel, but ultimately boring. ★★

CYBERCON III
US Gold £24.99

Uppers – Brilliant sense of 'being there', and better Freescape than Freescape. ***Downers*** – Predictably, not all that accessible to your average game player. ***The Bottom Line*** – Well worth the effort of getting into. ★★★★★

DAMOCLES
Novagen £24.99
Uppers – Excellent use of solid 3D graphics to depict a play area spanning a whole solar system. ***Downers*** – The exploration and puzzle solving concept has already been used extensively in *Mercenary* et al. ***The Bottom Line*** – *Mercenary* with filled-in graphics – Paul Woakes fans will play it for months. ★★★

DAN DARE III
Virgin £19.99
Uppers – Nice loading sequence. ***Downers*** – Unfortunately the whole thing goes downhill from there. ***The Bottom Line*** – Great on 8-bit, but Amiga owners should buy reprints of the comic instead. ★★

DAS BOOT
Mindscape £29.99
Uppers – The most accessible sub sim to date. ***Downers*** – ...but that still doesn't make it particularly accessible. ***The Bottom Line*** – Playable, but overpriced. The best in its field. ★★★

DEATH TRAP
Anco £24.99
Uppers – Unusual mix of horizontally-scrolling arcade adventure and magic. ***Downers*** – Naff scrolling and poor sound mar the atmosphere. ***The Bottom Line*** – A refreshingly playable game. ★★

DEFENDER II
ARC £24.99
Uppers – *Defender*, *Defender II* and *Stargate* all in one package – the action never lets up. ***Downers*** – Only purists will appreciate the archaic graphics, one or two essential features are omitted, and the *Defender II* game is duff. ***The Bottom Line*** – Don't judge it by appearances alone – every home should have one. ★★★★

DISTANT ARMIES
Exocet £24.99
Uppers – Ten different variations of chess, all in one package. Nice graphics, tons of background information. ***Downers*** – Definitely for chess-heads only. ***The Bottom Line*** – The ideal present for the cerebral Amiga owner. ★★★

DRAGON BREED
Activision £24.99

Uppers – A near perfect arcade conversion; niftily animated main dragon sprite. ***Downers*** – The zillionth sideways scrolling shoot-'em-up of last year. ***The Bottom Line*** – One instinctively knows when a conversion is right. ★★★★

DRAGONFLIGHT
Thalion £34.99
Uppers – Elegantly designed, perfectly executed fantasy RPG. ***Downers*** – If only it wasn't such a tired old genre. ***The Bottom Line*** – Over-priced, unspectacular, but (let's be fair) still reasonable fun. ★★★

DRAGON FORCE
Interstel £29.99
Uppers – Nice strategy combat sim, not unlike *Laser Squad*. ***Downers*** – Seriously average graphics and a limited number of missions. ***The Bottom Line*** – Tries hard to reach the dizzy heights of the *Squad* (and just falls short). ★★★

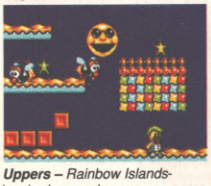
DRAGONS OF FLAME
SSI (US Gold) £24.99
Uppers – Almost instant playability – not something you'd expect from a role playing game. ***Downers*** – A bit simplistic for real Dungeons & Dragons fans. ***The Bottom Line*** – An excellent introduction to the new bread of fantasy RPGs. ★★★

DRAGON'S LAIR II
Readysoft £44.95
Uppers – Really incredibly gorgeous cartoon graphics. ***Downers*** – Minimal player interaction and a ridiculous price tag. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not the best value game in the world. ★★

DYNASTY WARS
US Gold £19.99
Uppers – A beat-'em-up with horses and distinctly Japanese graphics. Neat. ***Downers*** – Pity about the sound and limited gameplay. ***The Bottom Line*** – A road of clap. ★★

ECO PHANTOMS
Electronic Zoo £24.99
Uppers – Atmospheric alien-style graphics and complex, multi-faceted gameplay give it a totally original feel. ***Downers*** – Despite the plot and shiny exterior it lacks excitement. ***The Bottom Line*** – Different, but not a vital game by any means. ★★★

EDD THE DUCK
Impulze £24.99



Uppers – *Rainbow Islands*-inspired gameplay ensures some level of interest. ***Downers*** – But the whole thing just doesn't inspire, and the difficulty is placed too high for a young audience. ***The Bottom Line*** – Your granny might buy you one. ★★

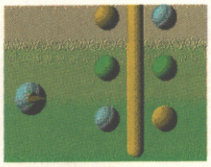
ELVIRA – MISTRESS OF THE DARK
Accolade £24.99
Uppers – Elvira's gorgeous; the graphics really draw the player in. ***Downers*** – Pity the game itself is nigh on impossible – and it takes five disks! ***The Bottom Line*** – Falls apart due to gratuitous disk swapping and infuriating gameplay. ★★

EMLYN HUGHES' ARCADE QUIZ
Audiogenic £24.99
Uppers – Just like a pub quiz machine... ***Downers*** – ...but with Emlyn Hughes in it (and no real cash prizes). ***The Bottom Line*** – Oh dear. ★

EMLYN HUGHES' INTERNATIONAL SOCCER
Audiogenic £24.99

Uppers – A wide range of moves and more options than Menu Master. ***Downers*** – Utterly unplayable and awkward. ***The Bottom Line*** – You'd have to be a crazy horse to buy this one. ★★

E-MOTION
US Gold £19.99



Uppers – Weird graphics and mindboggling gameplay set *E-Motion* apart from just about any other game. ***Downers*** – The whole concept may prove difficult to get your mind around. ***The Bottom Line*** – If you can handle the basic idea *E-Motion* offers many joyous hours of swearing and frustration. ★★★★★

ESWAT
US Gold £24.99
Uppers – As conversions go, it's not a complete nightmare... ***Downers*** – ...but let's be honest, the arcade original was duff, duff, duff. ***The Bottom Line*** – A reasonable conversion of a terminally average game. ★

EVERTON FC INTELLIGENCIA
AMFAS £19.95
Uppers – A footie fanatic's dream – a trivia quiz based on our national pastime. ***Downers*** – Haven't I answered that question two thousand times already? ***The Bottom Line*** – Ridiculous title, stupid concept. If you see it, burn it. ★

EXILE
Audiogenic £24.99
Uppers – Real-world physics incorporated into an arcade game; it's more of a true arcade adventure than most games bearing that tag. ***Downers*** – Rather primitive graphics, and not the most instantly playable game ever. ***The Bottom Line*** – A great arcade adventure, but it might not be your cup of tea if you're an action fan. ★★★½★

EXTERMINATOR
Audiogenic £24.99

Uppers – Very original (read 'very, very odd indeed') arcade thing, well converted to retain the original's feel. ***Downers*** – Confusing initially, but once you've played it for a while it's...confusing. ***The Bottom Line*** – Great fun, but it doesn't really make it in the longevity stakes. ★★★

EYE OF THE BEHOLDER
SSI (US Gold) £29.99

Uppers – Takes *Dungeon Master* a step further. Excellent atmosphere and graphics. ***Downers*** – Despite being better than *DM*, it's not actually very different from it at all. ***The Bottom Line*** – The best D&D game yet for the Amiga. (Or, indeed, for anything else.) ★★★★★

5TH GEAR
Hewson £19.99
Uppers – Erm, it's from Hewson. That's its redeeming feature. ***Downers*** – The game itself is a pretty pointless scrolling driving game (ie it's a disaster). ***The Bottom Line*** – Oh dear. ★

F-19 STEALTH FIGHTER
MicroProse £29.99
Uppers – Strategy and accuracy combine to bring a fresh edge to an over-populated genre. Hide, strike and run away! ***Downers*** – If you're good it can get dull, as no one knows you're there! ***The Bottom Line*** – Damn fine simulation. ★★★★

F-29 RETALIATOR
Ocean £24.99
Uppers – A great value flight sim, with some of the most spectacular graphics yet. ***Downers*** – Several bugs can severely irritate. ***The Bottom Line*** – One of the most accessible Amiga flight sims to date. Excellent stuff. ★★★

FINAL BATTLE
PSS £24.99
Uppers – Nice 3D isometric graphics; a sequel completely unlike its predecessor. ***Downers*** – The game is rendered unplayable by the impenetrable control system. ***The Bottom Line*** – Flawed. ★★

FIGHTING SOCCER
Activision £24.99

Uppers – The coin-op was mildly amusing(ish). ***Downers*** – You are accused of producing an utterly dull game of the lowest calibre. How do you plead? ***The Bottom Line*** – Guilty as hell. ★

FIRE AND BRIMSTONE
MicroProse £24.99
Uppers – Excellent *Ghosts 'N' Goblins*-inspired medieval romp, spiced up by the addition of puzzles. ***Downers*** – Not the most original or modern game ever. ***The Bottom Line*** – Neato. ★★★

FLOOD
Electronic Arts £24.99
Uppers – Climbing the walls and ceilings gives a new slant on the usual platform game; weapons are fun. ***Downers*** – Slow gameplay and there's not really that much going on. Colour is unusually dull for a cute game. ***The Bottom Line*** – Fun for a while but nothing special. ★★★

THE FOOL'S ERRAND
Miles Computing £24.95
Uppers – A puzzle game with real lastability – 80 problems to get your brain aching. ***Downers*** – Underneath the gloss, a fairly average game. ***The Bottom Line*** – Just okay. ★★

FUTURE BASKETBALL
Hewson £24.99

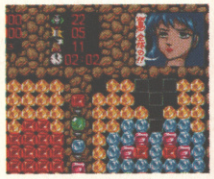
Uppers – Fast, violent, exciting and well presented mayhem. ***Downers*** – The poor man's *Speedball 2*. ***The Bottom Line*** – Doesn't have the depth of the Bitmaps' classic, but enormous fun all the same. ★★★

GALAXY FORCE II
Activision £24.99
Uppers – An ambitious attempt at a visually stunning coin-op. ***Downers*** – Everything else. ***The Bottom Line*** – If you know you can't do it why bother trying? ★

GARFIELD – THE WINTER'S TAIL
The Edge £24.99
Uppers – Brilliant Jim Davis graphics. ***Downers*** – Crappy Steve Davis gameplay. ***The Bottom Line*** – What a wasted licence. For die-hard fans only. ★

GAZZA II
Empire £24.99
Uppers – Gazza doesn't actually appear in the game much. ***Downers*** – Juddering sprites, poor control (just like the man himself), terrible sound – take your pick. ***The Bottom Line*** – It's enough to reduce you to tears. ★

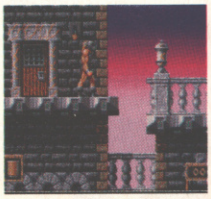
GEM'X
Demonware £24.99



Uppers – Gorgeous graphics, exquisite sound, beautifully simple mental torture. ***Downers*** – Won't change your mind if you're not into puzzlers. ***The Bottom Line*** – One of the best puzzle games to date.★★★★

GHENGHIS KHAN
Infogrames £39.99
Uppers – Stylish and fairly deep historical strategy game. ***Downers*** – Ridiculously expensive though, and requires a fair dose of manual reading. ***The Bottom Line*** – A bit of a cliché, but 'good if you like that sort of thing.' ★★★

GODS
Renegade £25.53



Uppers – Lovely aesthetics, quite involved for a platform game. ***Downers*** – Not quite as good as it's made out to be. ***The Bottom Line*** – Don't believe the hype, but pretty damn good all the same. ★★★★

GOLDEN AXE
Virgin £24.99

Uppers – Perfect arcade conversion, with every last feature implemented. ***Downers*** – There never really was a lot of variation in the gameplay. ***The Bottom Line*** – Visually stunning, but not different enough to separate it from the usual beat-'em-up. ★★★

THE GOLD OF THE AZTECS
US Gold £24.99

Uppers – The animation gives the hero real character for once, and each screen is a separate challenge. Loads of nice touches. ***Downers*** – The control is a tad awkward until you get used to it. ***The Bottom Line*** – A simpler game than it first appears, but nonetheless a totally absorbing one. ★★★★

GRAND PRIX MASTER
Dinamic £19.95

Uppers – Endorsed by Jorge Martinez (apparently famous on the 80cc motorcycle circuit). ***Downers*** – Handles like a Reliant Robin. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not to put too fine a point on it, useless. ★

GRAVITY
Mirrorsoft £24.95

Uppers – Startlingly original graphics, gameplay, concept and just about everything else really. ***Downers*** – Maybe a bit too weird for some. ***The Bottom Line*** – Free your mind, and your ass will follow. A cult classic. ★★★

GREMLINS II
Elite £24.99

Uppers – Cute as hell, with graphics and sound nigh on perfect. ***Downers*** – It really is far too difficult. ***The Bottom Line*** – A good film licence. ★★★

GHOSTS 'N' GOBLINS
Elite £19.99

Uppers – As close a coin-op conversion as you could possibly hope for. ***Downers*** – Mind you, it is a bit on the ancient side. ***The Bottom Line*** – Who cares about modern when a game is this good? ★★★

HAMMERFIST
Vivid Image (Activision) £24.99

Uppers – Graphically adept arcade adventure with tons of playability and plenty to keep you going. ***Downers*** – Iffy sound. ***The Bottom Line*** – Thoroughly enjoyable (if you like that sort of thing). ★★★

HARD DRIVIN' II
Tengen (Domark) £24.99

Uppers – Refined version of the original – less bugs, a track editor, a neat 'head-to-head' option if you link two machines... ***Downers*** – ...but still glitchy and not a patch on the arcade machine. ***The Bottom Line*** – Souped up, but not souped up enough. ★★

HARLEY DAVIDSON
Mindscape £24.99

Uppers – Slick as oil, with lots of neat touches to put you into Easy Rider mode. ***Downers*** – The actual game is uninspiring and repetitive. ***The Bottom Line*** – Born to be mild. ★

HEAVY METAL
US Gold £24.99

Uppers – Good presentation, the three arcade sections threaded together with a smattering of strategy. ***Downers*** – The action sequences are a bit shoddy, and the sound is pitiful. ***The Bottom Line*** – An uneven game which fails to hold the interest. ★★

HELTER SKELTER
Audiogenic £19.99

Uppers – Highly original gameplay; password system greatly increases addictiveness; great cartoon sound effects. ***Downers*** – Extremely tricky control method which is difficult to use even with practice. Gets samey after a while. ***The Bottom Line*** – Dubious lasting appeal, but a fun little game if you fancy something a bit different. ★★★

HORROR ZOMBIES FROM THE CRYPT
Millenium £24.99

Uppers – Unusual idea; suitably spooky graphics. ***Downers*** – But let down by the dull platform nature of the game. ***The Bottom Line*** – Funny to watch, but fairly average to play. ★★

IMPERIUM
Electronic Arts £24.99

Uppers – As vast as they come, with more twiddly strategy bits than you could reasonably hope for. ***Downers*** – Mac-style graphics look dull, and the whole game lacks any visual sparkle. ***The Bottom Line*** – One for dedicated strategy-heads only. *Supremacy* fans might dig it. ★★

INDIANA JONES ADVENTURE
US Gold £19.99

Uppers – More fine-tuning gives Indy the friendliest control system yet. It's pretty faithful to the movie too! ***Downers*** – Waiting for Indy to trek across the screen all the time can get annoying and some of the puzzles are just a wee bit too abstract. ***The Bottom Line*** – Quite simply the best Amiga adventure to date. ★★★★

INTERNATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING
Hewson £24.99

Uppers – It's funny (but for all the wrong reasons). ***Downers*** – It stinks like a sweaty leotard. ***The Bottom Line*** – A bigger farce than the sport itself. A decent wrestling game has yet to be written. ★

IMMORTAL, THE
Electronic Arts £24.99

Uppers – A game which makes real use of 1 meg memory... ***Downers*** – ...which means most Amiga owners will never see it. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not the best fantasy arcade adventure by any means, but the gorgeous graphics lift it well above average. ★★★

IMPOSSAMOLE
Gremlin £19.99

Uppers – There's nothing really wrong with it.... ***Downers*** – ...but the whole thing is just so forgettable. ***The Bottom Line*** – *Impossamole?* What's that? ★

INDIANAPOLIS 500
Electronic Arts £24.95

Uppers – An immensely playable blend of true racing sim and quick track blast, with a nice line in remote camera views (if you've got a 1 meg machine). ***Downers*** – Track repetition hinders lasting appeal. ***The Bottom Line*** – Just fabulous. ★★★★★

INTERNATIONAL SOCCER CHALLENGE
MicroProse £24.99

Uppers – Soccer in 3D? A very brave attempt to do something new with a tired old game-style... ***Downers*** – ...which unfortunately falls flat on its face. ***The Bottom Line*** – Foul. ★

INTERNATIONAL 3D TENNIS
Palace £24.99

Uppers – Novel use of 3D polygon graphics, with fluid animation and nine camera angles. ***Downers*** – Its attempt to re-create the feel of tennis isn't entirely successful. ***The Bottom Line*** – Very good, but it's got stiff competition from the likes of *Pro Tennis Tour 2*. ★★★

IRON LORD
Ubi Soft £24.99

Uppers – Cinemaware-style medieval epic with plenty of sub-games and atmospheric presentation. ***Downers*** – It's just too tough for most, and with little real depth. ***The Bottom Line*** – Ultimately repetitive, but fun for a while. ★★

ISHIDO
Accolade £24.99

Uppers – Take Othello, add some Go, then throw in a few herbs and spices and heat until brown. The result is one piping hot Chinese board game called *Ishido*. ***Downers*** – Irritating dialogue boxes, and the luck element can infuriate. ***The Bottom Line*** – An engaging piece of Chinese culture, which should really be played with a good strong cup of tea. ★★

ITALY 90
US Gold £24.99

Uppers – A wealth of teams and players; reasonable in-game graphics. ***Downers*** – Crap sound effects, and the action doesn't really grab like it should. ***The Bottom Line*** – A reasonable soccer bash, but frankly it's last year's game. ★★★

IVANHOE
Ocean £24.99

Uppers – Simply unbelievable graphics and cartoon animation (we saw them and still don't believe them). ***Downers*** – Far too easy to complete. ***The Bottom Line*** – Next time can we have a game supplied with our pretty pictures, please? ★★

JAMES POND
Millennium £24.99

Uppers – It's slicker than a pot of Brylcreem, with beautifully simple gameplay to instantly hook the unsuspcting player. ***Downers*** – Lacks any real adrenalin-pumping qualities. ***The Bottom Line*** – Loads of initial cute appeal, but really a pretty run-of-the-mill arcade runabout. ★★★

JUDGE DREDD
Virgin £24.99

Uppers – Two ancient sub-games offer a real rave from the grave. ***Downers*** – Another *Judge Dredd* game screwed up totally. No humour, no graphics, no game. ***The Bottom Line*** – One day somebody will do justice (ahem) to the legend of Dredd. One day. ★

JUMPING JACK SON
Infogrames £19.99

Uppers – Stupendous music, instant addiction, cute graphics. ***Downers*** – Severely limited in the lastability department. ***The Bottom Line*** – A great show-case for the Amiga, but a bit average playability-wise. ★★

JUPITER'S MASTERDRIVE
Ubi Soft £24.99

Uppers – Surprisingly playable race game. More fun than a packet of Jammy Dodgers. ***Downers*** – Unspectacular and overpriced. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not sure why, but it really is jolly good fun. ★★

KEEF THE THIEF
Electronic Arts £24.99

Uppers – Excellent hack, slash and puzzle solving with some superb stylised graphics. ***Downers*** – It still plays like your average role-playing adventure. ***The Bottom Line*** – Respectable Tolkien-esque fare. ★★★

KICK OFF 2
Anco £19.99

Uppers – The same great features as *Kick Off 1* plus better goalies. ***Downers*** – Those better goalies (it can prove very hard to score). ***The Bottom Line*** – The definitive footie game (even if a suspiciously high proportion of people find it all but uncontrollable). ★★★★★

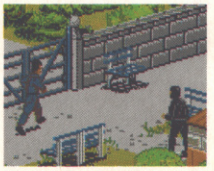
THE KILLING CLOUD
Image Works £24.99

Uppers – Fast-moving and pretty graphics, bags of depth, and a great creation of atmospher***Downers*** – Riddled with inconsistencies and badly-executed ideas. ***The Bottom Line*** – Could have been a contender, but badly lets itself down in the logic stakes. ★★★

THE KILLING GAME SHOW
Psygnosis £24.99

Uppers – Straightforward fun game sharing some aspects of gameplay with *Rainbow Islands*. The interactive replay feature is interesting, innovative, and useful. ***Downers*** – The usual Psygnosis metallic graphics don't really suit; it gets a bit too complicated for its own good later on, detracting from the simplicity that initially makes it so addictive. ***The Bottom Line*** – Despite unusually poor graphics, this is one of Psygnosis' best and most playable games to date. ★★★

LAST NINJA 2
System 3 £24.99



Uppers – Excellent 3D isometric graphics and a genuine attempt to inject some strategy into the martial arts genre. ***Downers*** – The game just isn't cohesive, and it plays like a pig. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not really in the Bruce Lee league (barely scraping Jackie Chan level to be honest). ★★

KLAX
Tengen (Domark) £19.99

Uppers – More scope than *Tetris*, better looking and sounding too; deceptive pace means it gets pretty frantic without you really noticing. ***Downers*** – Not for the slow-witted. If you don't have a naturally calm nature you'll chuck it out the window within minutes. ***The Bottom Line*** – A real mind-wrencher and a near perfect conversion. ★★★★

LANCASTER
Actual Screenshots £24.95

Uppers – Fairly impressive 3D polygon graphics; an unusual approach to a WWII sim. ***Downers*** – Lack of variation and any real excitement means it barely gets off the ground. ***The Bottom Line*** – Elevates averageness to an art form. ★★

LEISURE SUIT LARRY III
Sierra £34.99

Uppers – Ridiculous, over-sexed plot. Adventuring for consenting adults. ***Downers*** – Slightly obtrusive command parser, and as usual it's over-priced. ***The Bottom Line*** – Check it out – but only if you are over eighteen. ★★★

LEMMINGS
Psygnosis £24.99

Uppers – Utterly bizarre, pleasingly original and totally addictive. Invents a totally new category – the save-'em-up. ***Downers*** – As is the norm with such strikingly original concepts, some may wonder just what all the fuss is about. ***The Bottom Line*** – Love it or loathe it, you can't ignore it. Lemmings rule. ★★★★★

LINE OF FIRE
US Gold £24.99

Uppers – Imagine all the Rambo films back-to-back on fast-forward, and you have a good idea how much violence this game contains. ***Downers*** – You also have a pretty good idea of how intelligent it is. ***The Bottom Line*** – An impossible arcade conversion proves totally and utterly impossible. ★★

LOOM
Lucasfilm (US Gold) £24.99

Uppers – Great atmosphere, enhanced by the accompanying tape, booklets etc. It's certainly a lavish package. ***Downers*** – An adventure without typing? It certainly won't appeal to purists, and the 'audio drama' is laughable. ***The Bottom Line*** – Once again Lucasfilm strive for something different. The results are interesting, if not totally successful. ★★★

LOST PATROL
Ocean £24.99

Uppers – Graphics are nothing short of stunning. ***Downers*** – Unfortunately the game itself is incredibly tedious (if you can actually find any in there). ***The Bottom Line*** – Atmospheric but lacking any playability. One for Vietnam obsessives only. ★★

LOTUS ESPRIT TURBO CHALLENGE
Gremlin £24.99

Uppers – A wealth of control options lets you make the game more arcadey or simulationy according to preference. Bags of 'feel'. ***Downers*** – The other cars are a bit flat-looking, and half the screen is wasted in one-player mode. (You don't appear to be able to turn the annoying music off either). ***The Bottom Line*** – An extremely good driving game, even more fun with two players. ★★★★

MAGIC FLY
Electronic Arts £24.99

Uppers – Very challenging. ***Downers*** – But not too thrilling, and who wants wireframe 3D in 1991? ***The Bottom Line*** – You may not find it worth all the bother of getting into it. ★★

MANHUNTER 2
Sierra (Activision) £29.99

Uppers – More exciting than normal for this type of game. ***Downers*** – Badly-judged puzzles, awful graphics, and the arcade sequences are execrable. ***The Bottom Line*** – Dire game at a scandalous price. ★

MANIX
Millennium £24.99
Uppers – Charmingly surreal. ***Downers*** – But it's just an updated *Q-Bert* really, isn't it? ***The Bottom Line*** – Never really gets its hooks into you. ★★

MASTERBLAZER
Rainbow Arts £24.99
Uppers – Excellent two player mode, fast 3D action – all in all a respectable updating of the original future-sport game. ***Downers*** – Despite the new features, *Masterblazer* looks and feels dated. ***The Bottom Line*** – Fun for a few hours, but too simplistic to hold any lasting appeal. ★★★

MEAN STREETS
US Gold £24.99
Uppers – Many different styles combine well for (ahem) a wide-ranging gameplay experience. ***Downers*** – Dragged down by disk swapping. ***The Bottom Line*** – Good solid entertainment. A bit like Lenny Henry, really. ★★★

MIDNIGHT RESISTANCE
Ocean £24.99
Uppers – Well-balanced gameplay with a smooth difficulty curve makes it stand out from a hundred similar coin-op conversions. Actually more playable than the arcade original. ***Downers*** – Control is awkward at first; could be a touch faster. ***The Bottom Line*** – Best of its type. ★★★

MIDWINTER
Rainbird £24.99
Uppers – Vast as something that is very vast indeed, with loads of strategy bits, and some very nice 3D indeed. ***Downers*** – Occasional pockets of boredom tend to break the tension; apparently very easy to complete if you know how. ***The Bottom Line*** – Mike Singleton finally brings his classic *Lords of Midnight* up to date. ★★★

MIGHTY BOMB JACK
Elite £24.99
Uppers – Classic gameplay with added 16-bit features like, erm, power-ups. ***Downers*** – Sprawling levels lose the original's frantic urgency. ***The Bottom Line*** – Dull, dull, and then again dull. ★

MIG-29
Domark £29.99
Uppers – So real you'll be be hanging pictures of Gorby on your wall. ***Downers*** – Only five missions, with little in the way of excitement. ***The Bottom Line*** – Brave, but ultimately too techie for most Amiga owners. ★★★

M1 TANK PLATOON
MicroProse £24.99
Uppers – Cheaper than a real tank. ***Downers*** – Needs a lot of perseverance. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not as much fun as actually having a tank platoon on the M1. ★★

MONTY PYTHON'S FLYING CIRCUS
Virgin £19.99
Uppers – Some genuinely funny humour, captures the style of the TV show without just rehashing it. ***Downers*** – Basic gameplay is pretty, erm, basic. ***The Bottom Line*** – Still fun after you've seen all the jokes. ★★★

MOONSHINE RACERS
Millennium £24.99
Uppers: Erm, great hillbilly music. ***Downers:*** Slow, graphically horrible, totally derivative. ***The Bottom Line***: Almost as bad as Amiga *Chase HQ*, and you've got to admit that's pretty damn bad.★

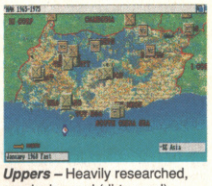
MOONWALKER
US Gold £24.99
Uppers – Pleasantly spaced-out scenario. ***Downers*** – Where can we start? Abysmal graphics, monumentally tedious gameplay, generally crap everything. ***The Bottom Line*** – Spend the money on a nose job instead. ★

MUDS
Rainbow Arts £24.99
Uppers – Quite funny. ***Downers*** – Do we really need another rugby/basketball/ violence-based future sport? ***The Bottom Line*** – Giving everything silly names doesn't make this game different to the dozen others it's just the same as. ★★

MURDER
US Gold £24.99
Uppers – Highly atmospheric black-and-white look. ***Downers*** – Repetitive. ***The Bottom Line*** – If you've got plenty of patience, it's an absorbing brain-teaser. ★★★

MYSTICAL
Infogrames £24.99
Uppers – Fresh graphical approach to the the usual fantasy scenario. ***Downers*** – Really badly-thought-out two-player mode. ***The Bottom Line*** – An uninspired *Gauntlet* clone. ★★

'NAM
Domark £24.95



Uppers – Heavily researched, convincing and (dirty word) educational strategic war game. ***Downers*** – Very hard to win, the whole serious look to the thing could be a turn off. ***The Bottom Line*** – Political as well as tactical decision making gives a new dimension to war games. ★★★

NARC
Ocean £24.99
Uppers – Great blood-spattering action; very close to the coin-op. ***Downers*** – Very dodgy on the playability front (not to say morally). ***The Bottom Line*** – Limited. ★★

NARCO POLICE
Dinamic £24.99
Uppers – Looks excellent. ***Downers*** – Computer takes a 'creative' attitude towards obeying control commands. ***The Bottom Line*** – Loud and action-packed blaster for expert commandos. ★★

NEBULUS
Hewson £19.99
Uppers – Truly innovative gameplay and graphics which wouldn't look out of place in an arcade. The climb up/fall down routine makes it almost too addictive for safety. ***Downers*** – Not for softies – some could find this just too frustrating. ***The Bottom Line*** – Classically simple design makes for a game that won't let go once it gets its hooks into you (which will be about two minutes after you pick it up). ★★★★

NEUROMANCER
Electronic Arts £24.99
Uppers – The only contender in its field. ***Downers*** – That doesn't make it any good, though. ***The Bottom Line*** – None of the atmosphere of the book. Not so much Chiba City as Average City. ★★

NIGHT SHIFT
Lucasfilm (US Gold) £24.99
Uppers – Graphically innovative and full of character. ***Downers*** – Detail-packed background can make it hard to see where the actual platforms are; more time spent loading than playing. ***The Bottom Line*** – A few instructions would work wonders, but the game's overwhelming charm pulls it through. ★★★

NEW YORK WARRIORS
Virgin £19.99
Uppers – Reasonably atmospheric, undemanding blaster. ***Downers*** – Oh God, *Ikari Warriors Part 844194365408354*. ***The Bottom Line*** – You can buy much better, cheaper. ★

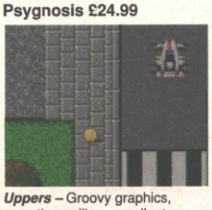
NINE LIVES
ARC £24.99
Uppers – Cute and inventive platform fun. ***Downers*** – Tougher than Mike Tyson in a suit of armour. With a bazooka. ***The Bottom Line*** – You've got as much chance of finishing it as Wile E. Coyote has of catching Road Runner. ★★★

NINJA REMIX
System 3 £24.99
Uppers – Closer to what *Last Ninja 2* should have been. Extremely high-quality graphics... ***Downers*** – ...hiding a near-terminal lack of gameplay. ***The Bottom Line*** – Ideal for game players with dicky hearts, otherwise keep the electro-shock equipment handy for those, er, sedate moments. ★★

NINJA SPIRIT
Activision £24.99
Uppers – Fast and violent arcade conversion. ***Downers*** – Original was a production-line job, no imagination or sparkle. Awful disk accessing problems. ***The Bottom Line*** – Tedious crap. ★

NINJA WARRIORS
Virgin £19.99
Uppers – Novel 'Cinemascope'-esque screen layout. Dynamic Loading System is a boon but doesn't get rid of irritating swapping. ***Downers*** – Extremely repetitive action palls quickly. ***The Bottom Line*** – Even for a game of this type, the gameplay is too limited to hold the attention for any length of time. ★★

NITRO
Psygnosis £24.99



Uppers – Groovy graphics, smooth scrolling, excellent car-handling. ***Downers*** – A practically infinite-credit system means the game has little sense of urgency. You have to guess the course on later levels. ***The Bottom Line*** – Needs more in the way of immediate danger to be addictive, but (unlike many similar games) is as fun in one player mode as with a couple of chums. ★★★

NUCLEAR WAR
US Gold £19.99
Uppers – Interesting cross between *Risk* and *Dictator*. ***Downers*** – Utterly feeble puns, and dubious taste. ***The Bottom Line*** – Very limited game, not really saved by the humour. ★

OBITUS
Psygnosis £34.99
Uppers – Intro would make a great Amiga *Deathchase* game. ***Downers*** – *Obitus* itself is a dull *Dungeon Master* rip-off. ***The Bottom Line*** – Boring and ridiculously priced. ★★

ONSLAUGHT
Hewson £24.99

Uppers – Lovely sound and music; lots of depth. ***Downers*** – Very confusing graphics and gameplay, and the main sequences are technically below the level of your average budget game. ***The Bottom Line*** – Caught between the two stools of wargaming and platform zap games, this isn't a very good example of either. ★★

OOOPS UP
Demonware £24.95

Uppers – Arcade fun in the *Pang*, er, 'tradition'. ***Downers*** – Colossally inferior to the real thing. ***The Bottom Line*** – The excellent sampled music isn't enough to save this bare-faced rip-off. Check out the real thing instead. ★★

OPERATION STEALTH
Delphine (US Gold) £24.99
Uppers – More of a James Bond feel than any official James Bond game. Not too much disk faffing about either (which makes a change). ***Downers*** – Arcade sequences will irritate the adventure purist. It's also tedious having to examine every pixel of every location by hand. ***The Bottom Line*** – The best game of its type so far. A reasonably friendly operating system and an immense challenge. ★★★★

OPERATION THUNDERBOLT
Ocean £24.99
Uppers – Utterly mindless genocidal slaughterfest; perhaps the best *Op Wolf* style game to date. ***Downers*** – More of the coin-op's appeal is down to the cabinet-mounted Uzi than you might think, leaving the Amiga version somewhat 'flat'. ***The Bottom Line*** – Everything you could expect a conversion of *Operation Thunderbolt* to be. ★★★

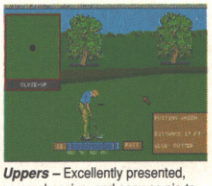
ORIENTAL GAMES
MicroStyle £24.99

Uppers – Joystick editor makes fighting user-friendly. ***Downers*** – So out-of-date it's wearing flares. ***The Bottom Line*** – Misleading title disguises a standard beat-'em-up. ★★

PANG
Ocean £24.99
Uppers – A perfect arcade conversion; novel two player mode and heaps of addictiveness make it the last word in cute games. ***Downers*** – The long wait between games is a bit of a bind. ***The Bottom Line*** – You'll be blowing bubbles forever. ★★★★★

PARADROID 90
Hewson £24.99
Uppers – Nothing compares to *Paradroid* in terms of original gameplay and elegant bas-relief graphics. ***Downers*** – Old C64 games players may be disappointed with the lack of new features. ***The Bottom Line*** – A five year old game idea, and it still wipes the floor with most competition. ★★★★★

PGA TOUR GOLF
Electronic Arts £24.99



Uppers – Excellently presented, comprehensive, and easy as pie to get into. ***Downers*** – There's a limited amount of scope to any golf game, and *PGA* doesn't even try to transcend it. ***The Bottom Line*** – The pinnacle of Amiga golf so far. ★★★★★

PHOTON STORM
ARC £24.99

Uppers – Incredibly frantic blasting experience. ***Downers*** – Not one to buy if you want to show off your shiny new Amiga's snazzy graphics. ***The Bottom Line*** – If you're a Minter fan you'll love it. A finely-tuned adrenalin machine. ★★★★

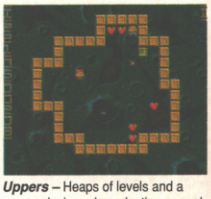
PICK'N'PILE
Ubi Soft £19.99
Uppers – Fascinating mix of *Puzznic* and *Boulder Dash*. ***Downers*** – 8-bit graphics don't help visual clarity any. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not enough variation to sustain it for long. ★★

PLOTTING
Ocean £24.99
Uppers – A novelty – a puzzle game with cute graphics! ***Downers*** – Gets samey after a while, less freedom than other puzzlers makes for a shorter life-span. ***The Bottom Line*** – A charming little game, but eventually dull. ★★★★

POLICE QUEST 2
Sierra (Activision) £34.95
Uppers – Er, very realistic sim of a policeman's lot. ***Downers*** – ie half the game is form-filling. ***The Bottom Line*** – Too much like a tedious day at the office. ★★

POPULOUS
Electronic Arts £24.99
Uppers – Totally unique gameplay and smooth 3D isometric graphics add up to a game with depth and sparkle. ***Downers*** – The icon control system really is very confusing. ***The Bottom Line*** – An essential for all open-minded Amiga owners. ★★★★★

THE POWER
Demonware £24.99



Uppers – Heaps of levels and a screen designer keep lasting appeal up, and the music is excellent. ***Downers*** – A touch derivative, and lacks that indefinable something that makes a puzzle game great. ***The Bottom Line*** – Try before you buy, you might like it, but rather average to our eyes. ★★★

POWER DRIFT
Activision £19.99
Uppers – All the arcade's tracks, characters, and secret features. ***Downers*** – The graphics can get very confusing, and the gameplay isn't really that close to the original. ***The Bottom Line*** – A good stab at a very difficult conversion, but not quite good enough. ★★★

POWERMONGER
Electronic Arts £29.99
Uppers – The brave new face of wargames... ***Downers*** – ..which looks suspiciously like *Populous*. ***The Bottom Line*** – Despite similarities to a certain other title, *Powermonger* really is an excellent game in its own right. ★★★★

PRINCE OF PERSIA
Broderbund £24.99
Uppers – Phenomenal animation, loads of atmosphere and some good old-fashioned gameplay. ***Downers*** – Control is initially tricky, and getting sent to the start of a level every time you die is always annoying. ***The Bottom Line*** – Technically stunning and great fun at the same time. Why can't all games be like this? ★★★★★

PROJECTYLE
Electronic Arts £24.99
Uppers – Incredibly fast action, lots of depth if you want it and terrifyingly competitive in multi-player mode. ***Downers*** – A bit *too* fast and frantic for some. ***The Bottom Line*** – The most imaginative future sport yet, and arguably the best. ★★★★

PRO TENNIS TOUR 2
Ubi Soft £24.99

Uppers – Possibly the most realistic sports sim to grace the Amiga, with features galore. ***Downers*** – So if you hate the real thing, you won't go for this. ***The Bottom Line*** – Nothing short of wonderful.★★★★

PURSUIT TO EARTH

Exocet £19.95

Uppers – Reminiscent of *Gyruss*, the classic arcade zapper. ***Downers*** – But completely crap. ***The Bottom Line*** – About as much fun as getting hit by a real Exocet. ★

PUZZNIC

Ocean £24.99

Uppers – Classically simple and very addictive, not to mention original. ***Downers*** – Infuriatingly tough on later levels. ***The Bottom Line*** – Don't be put off by the useless graphics, this is a wonderful brain teaser. ★★★★

RAILROAD TYCOON

MicroProse £29.99

Uppers – Frightening amount of depth. ***Downers*** – Very slow to get into (and very slow even when you *do* get into it). ***The Bottom Line*** – If you've got a lot of time to invest in it, well worth a look. ★★★★

RALLY CROSS CHALLENGE

Anco £19.95

Uppers – Well-programmed *Super Sprint* clone that's great fun with multiple players. ***Downers*** – Limited lastability. ***The Bottom Line*** – Still one of the best in its field, but that's more down to lack of competition than anything else. ★★

RANX

Ubi Soft £24.99

Uppers – Totally ideologically unsound. ***Downers*** – Totally ideologically unsound. ***The Bottom Line*** – Brilliantly-presented but ultimately limited comic strip beat-'em-up. Ideologically unsound. ★★

RED STORM RISING

MicroProse £24.99

Uppers – Unbelievably realistic, the best of its kind. ***Downers*** – Almost total lack of moving graphics. ***The Bottom Line*** – A strategist's dream, but if you really want a submarine experience this realistic, go join the navy. ★★

RESOLUTION 101

Millenium £24.95

Uppers – Extremely fast, plenty to do. ***Downers*** – Sparse, very basic graphics. ***The Bottom Line*** – Just a little bit too repetitive. ★★★

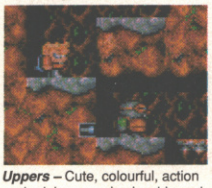
REVELATION

Krisalis £19.99

Uppers – Neat idea – a puzzle game based on safe cracking. ***Downers*** – Too complex to just pick up and play – bad news for a puzzler. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not bad, but could have been better presented (and who thought up that utterly meaningless name?) ★★

RICK DANGEROUS 2

MicroStyle £24.99



Uppers – Cute, colourful, action packed, immensely playable and better paced than *Rick 1*... ***Downers*** – ...but really not all that dissimilar, and still packed with far too much in the way of unforeseeable danger. ***The Bottom Line*** – Loveable. ★★★

ROBOCOP 2

Ocean £24.99

Uppers – Great graphics, generally excellent presentation. ***Downers*** – Awkward controls, some infuriating gameplay traits, and it's all a touch too formulaic. ***The Bottom Line*** – Could have been a good deal better. ★★★

ROCKET RANGER

Cinemaware £24.99

Uppers – See 'Cinemaware Game Standard Review No.1 (paragraph 334, 'Nice Graphics And Their Usage')' ***Downers*** – See 'Cinemaware Game Standard Review No.1 (paragraph 369, 'Totally Excessive Disk-Swapping And How It Ruins Game Flow')' ***The Bottom Line*** – Has its die-hard fans, but actually finding a game in here can seem a bit tricky sometimes. ★★★

ROGUE TROOPER

Krisalis £24.99

Uppers – Fairly entertaining arcade adventure with devious but logical puzzles and an excellent free collectors' comic. ***Downers*** – One life – one mistake and you're all the way back to the start of the first level (Aaarrgh!) ***The Bottom Line*** – Good fun for the persistent, and a good licence for a change. ★★

RORKE'S DRIFT

Impressions £19.99

Uppers – Authentic table-top wargame sim. ***Downers*** – No sound, few options, irritating to play. ***The Bottom Line*** – Very limited (in every sense). ★

ROTOX

US Gold £24.99

Uppers – Rotoscape (tm) works very well. ***Downers*** – Crap sound, massively irritating continue system, huge disk-accessing pauses between levels and games. ***The Bottom Line*** – Bolox. ★

SATAN

Dinamic £19.99

Uppers – You won't finish it in a hurry. ***Downers*** – Spookily similar to *Black Tiger*. ***The Bottom Line*** – The game that put the 'age' in 'average'. ★★

SHADOW OF THE BEAST 2

Psygnosis £34.95

Uppers – Jaw-dropping graphics, and, er, um... that's it. ***Downers*** – Your first few games will be shorter than the accessing pauses between them. The Roger Dean T-shirt is nauseous. ***The Bottom Line*** – £34.95? Get out of here! ★★

SHADOW WARRIORS

Ocean £24.99

Uppers – Look, leave me alone, it's close to the arcade game, what else do you want me to say? ***Downers*** – Very tough and completely unrewarding. ***The Bottom Line*** – There's about as much game in here as there is in an empty crate with ' Tomatoes from Greenland' stamped on it. ★

SHANGHAI

Activision £19.99

Uppers – Based on an ancient Chinese tile game, so you know it's going to torture your mind, and it does. Friendly presentation too, and the multi-player against-the-clock games are action-packed enough for the most frenzied blasting fan. ***Downers*** – Slightly fiddly graphics can play havoc with your eyes. ***The Bottom Line*** – Scarily gripping for a game with no moving graphics. The first time you do it you'll want to take out an advert in The Times to tell everybody. ★★★★★

SHOCKWAVE

Digital Magic £24.99

Uppers – Lightning fast arcade quality *Afterburner/Star Wars* graphics. ***Downers*** – Tactical sections get in the way. ***The Bottom Line*** – A potentially great arcade monster shoot-'em-up ruined by trying to be brainy as well. ★★★

SIMULCRA

MicroStyle £24.99

Uppers – Mad, frantic 3D blast. ***Downers*** – Not much brain-expanding involved. ***The Bottom Line*** – An amphetamine classic. ★★★

SIRIUS 7

CRL £24.99

Uppers – Technically adequate. ***Downers*** – No thought, no imagination, no game, no fun. ***The Bottom Line*** – Almost as action-packed as *Xenon 2*. In pause mode. ★

SKI OR DIE

Electronic Arts £24.99

Uppers – *Skate Or Die* but with snow. ***Downers*** – *Skate Or Die* but with snow. ***The Bottom Line*** – Fun (for a while) with friends, but basically an old fashioned, patchy collection of unimpressive sub games. ★

SKULL AND CROSSBONES

Domark £24.99

Uppers – It's all reasonably true to the coin-op. ***Downers*** – Pityit was so crap then, isn't it? Appallingly slow, critically limited and bug-ridden. ***The Bottom Line*** – You'd have more fun being keelhauled.★

SPACE ROGUE

Origin (Mindscape) £29.99

Uppers – Well packaged, fairly playable. ***Downers*** – Seen *Elite*? You've seen this. Far too many controls. ***The Bottom Line*** – So like *Elite* it's practically criminal, but nowhere near as good. ★

SPEEDBALL II

Image Works £24.99

Uppers – The ultimate future sport game to date – fast, brutal, enormously playable. The Bitmaps' finest moment. ***Downers*** – Teams can be hard to tell apart in the heat of the action. ***The Bottom Line*** – Buy or die. ★★★★★

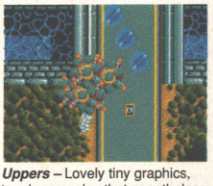
SPELLBOUND

Psyclapse £24.99

Uppers – Well-drawn backdrops, and, erm, the packaging is nice. ***Downers*** – Almost no in-game sound, practically nothing in the way of action. ***The Bottom Line*** – Hugely boring arcade adventure thing that's overpriced by £20. ★

THE SPY WHO LOVED ME

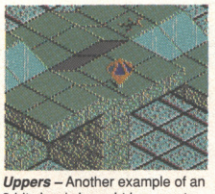
Domark £24.99



Uppers – Lovely tiny graphics, tough gameplay that nonetheless rewards a bit of effort. ***Downers*** – Only half-a-dozen levels – all completable after some practice – means it won't last all that long. ***The Bottom Line*** – Easily the best Bond game so far, and a fun *Spy Hunter* clone into the bargain, though not something you'll play for months. ★★★

SPINDIZZY WORLDS

Activision £24.99



Uppers – Another example of an 8-bit classic brought bang up to date with a sprawling play area and loads of new features. ***Downers*** – Bizarre controls to get to grips with and the graphics could be better. ***The Bottom Line*** – Superlative game design, and total addiction. Frustrating as hell, but nonetheless a masterpiece. ★★★★★

SPIRIT OF EXCALIBUR

Virgin £24.99

Uppers – Plenty of variation, and it certainly all looks lovely. ***Downers*** – Pitifully slow, and the different sections don't really seem to gel together. ***The Bottom Line*** – If you've got a few hours to kill while you're waiting for a train, this is a game that you can load up without fear of it causing you to miss it. (On the other hand, standing on the platform might be more fun).★★

STARGLIDER II

Rainbird £24.99

Uppers – Instant 3D blasting appeal, with extra depth for those who want it. ***Downers*** – Slightly too repetitive in the long-term. ***The Bottom Line*** – Still one of the best *Star Wars*-inspired releases on the Amiga. ★★★

STARBLADE

Palace £24.99

Uppers – Original concept. ***Downers*** – Sod all sound-wise, technically nothing to shout about. ***The Bottom Line*** – Run-of-the-mill. ★★

ST. DRAGON

Storm £24.99

Uppers – Lovely graphics, a helpful software autofire option, and a challenging difficulty curve lift this out of the morass of horizontal zappers. The Dynamic Loading System is an infinitely wonderful idea. ***Downers*** – A bit too tough for most, and the power-ups are unexciting. ***The Bottom Line*** – One of the few sideways-scrolling shoot-'em-ups that you really should own. ★★★★

STORM ACROSS EUROPE

SSI (US Gold) £24.99

Uppers – Playing the baddies makes a change. ***Downers*** – Takes ages to get into, and the graphics are primitive. ***The Bottom Line*** – Too ambitious for its own good. ★

STRIDER 2

US Gold £24.99

Uppers – Good animation and plenty of challenge. ***Downers*** – Very little advance on *Strider*, and shoddily presented. ***The Bottom Line*** – It's everything that's bad about sequels, and bears all the hallmarks of a rush job. ★★

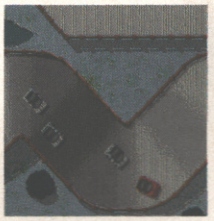
STUN RUNNER

Tengen (Domark) £24.99

Uppers – Er...the music isn't entirely crap. ***Downers*** – Hopelessly slow, graphically primitive, terminal lack of excitement. ***The Bottom Line*** – We'd rather see a great conversion of *Galaxians* than someone make a pig's ear of a game they knew they couldn't convert in the first place. ★

SUPERCARS 2

Gremlin £24.99



Uppers – Loads of tracks and tough gameplay means plenty of lasting interest. ***Downers*** – Arguably less playable than the original. ***The Bottom Line*** – If you only want to play it in one player mode, buy the *16 Bit Hitz* compilation featuring the original *Supercars* instead. ★★★

SUPER MONACO GP

US Gold £24.99

Uppers – Well-programmed and fun. ***Downers*** – Bears very little resemblance to the coin-op. ***The Bottom Line*** – A very good racing game, but don't expect the arcade. ★★★

SUPER OFF-ROAD RACER

Virgin £19.99

Uppers – Flawless arcade conversion. ***Downers*** – The track sequence is silly (four of the first eight races are on track 1), the difficulty curve is steep, and control is a tad over-sensitive. ***The Bottom Line*** – The Amiga's best *Super Sprint* game, but with some niggles that stop it being the true classic it might have been. ★★★★

SUPER SKWEEK

Loriciels £24.99

Uppers – Manic, silly, touching, very French. ***Downers*** – Not as endearing as the original *Skweek*. ***The Bottom Line*** – *Pac Man* for complete and utter lunatics. ★★★

SUPER WONDER BOY

Activision £19.99

Uppers – Perfect difficulty curve lets you get just a little bit further every go. Cute graphics add to the charm and the shops where you can spend your gold give it a little extra scope. ***Downers*** – Slightly lacking in action, too slow for some. Not exactly modern looking. ***The Bottom Line*** – Great game in the *Mario* vein, but with less enemies and more depth. ★★★

SUPREMACY

Virgin £29.99

Uppers – Galactic empire-building with some smart graphics. ***Downers*** – The number based gameplay renders it all completely uninteresting. ***The Bottom Line*** – For accountants and gullible people only. ★★

SWIV

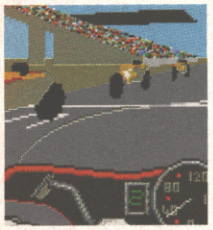
Storm £24.99

Uppers – Looks good, sounds good, comes with a neat two-player option – and all in one (massive) level too! ***Downers*** – There aren't any (unless you find all those drab military-style

★★★★★ Exceptional ★★★★★ Nearly there ★★★★ Very good ★★★ Has its moments ★★ Flawed ★ Dire

colours a bit depressing). ***The Bottom Line*** – Frantic – one of the best shoot-'em-ups we've seen. ★★★★★

TEAM SUZUKI
Gremlin £24.99



Uppers – Very fast, with some pretty hairy track views. Unintentionally hilarious replay feature. ***Downers*** – Insanely sensitive to control. ***The Bottom Line*** – Enough fun to keep you playing until you can at least stay on the road for five seconds at 60mph, but a bit too unrealistic to compete with *Indy 500*. ★★★

TEAM YANKEE
Empire £29.99

Uppers – The action slant on the standard tank sim makes it more immediate and accessible... ***Downers*** – ...but what a pity it lacks depth and excitement. ***The Bottom Line*** – Doesn't work as a strategy sim or arcade blast. ★★

TEENAGE MUTANT HERO TURTLES
Mirrorsoft £24.99

Uppers – It doesn't have the word 'Ninja' in the title... ***Downers*** – ...but even that doesn't save it from being utterly awful in every way. ***The Bottom Line*** – You'd have more fun playing with a real turtle. Or a real mutant. ★

TENNIS CUP
Loriciels £24.99

Uppers – Great sampled sound, split screen is a good idea. ***Downers*** – Terrible pause between pressing fire and anything happening. ***The Bottom Line*** – Very good tennis sim, but nothing remarkable. ★★★

THEIR FINEST HOUR
Lucasfilm (US Gold) £29.99

Uppers – Captures the flavour of WWII. ***Downers*** – Poor graphics, no detail, pretty slow. ***The Bottom Line*** – Loads of options will keep you at it almost as long as the real war. ★★★

THEME PARK MYSTERY
Image Works £24.99

Uppers – Great feel; looks and sounds lovely. ***Downers*** – Arcade sections are fairly pointless. ***The Bottom Line*** – Games which mix adventures with arcade sequences always suffer for it. ★★

THUNDERSTRIKE
Millennium £24.99

Uppers – *Defender* for the 3D generation. ***Downers*** – An absolute PC classic, so why is the Amiga conversion so appalling? ***The Bottom Line*** – A seriously average game which could have been an absolute gem. *Thunderstrike*? More like *Chunderstrike*. ★★

TIE BREAK
Ocean £24.99

Uppers – More of a simulation than a *Pong* game. ***Downers*** – Whoever thought up the 'scrolling court' idea should be shot. ***The Bottom Line*** – Hideously complex control makes this one more hassle than it's worth. ★★

THE TIME MACHINE
Activision £24.99

Uppers – It's nice to play a game that doesn't have 10,000 screens for a change. ***Downers*** – Gets frustrating having to do everything ten times. ***The Bottom Line*** – Too clever by half. ★★

TIME SOLDIER
Electrocoin £24.99

Uppers – Fair graphically, plenty of action. ***Downers*** – Bad conversion, repetitive gameplay. ***The Bottom Line*** – Poor quality, overpriced rush-job. ★

TORVAK THE WARRIOR
Core Design £24.99

Uppers – Beautiful, gloomy graphics. ***Downers*** – Incredibly slow and unremarkable *Rastan* game. ***The Bottom Line*** – Unresponsive control and a talentless hero cripple the gameplay. ★

TOTAL RECALL
Ocean £24.99

Uppers – A fair bit of gameplay variation. ***Downers*** – Unfriendly controls, uninspired design. ***The Bottom Line*** – Solid but unexciting. No feel for the movie. (And couldn't they afford the rights to use Arnie's real face?) ★★

TOURNAMENT GOLF
Elite £24.99

Uppers – Authentic arcade port. ***Downers*** – Nobody ever played the arcade game. ***The Bottom Line*** – Completely average golfing yawnerama. ★★

TOWER FRA
Thalion £24.99

Uppers – Yes, you guessed it, it's an air traffic control tower simulation. Not as boring as it sounds. ***Downers*** – It's still fairly boring though. ***The Bottom Line*** – Good training for the next generation of air traffic controllers. ★★

TOYOTA CELICA RALLY
Gremlin £24.99

Uppers – Very impressively detailed – a lot of effort has been taken to get an authentic feel here. ***Downers*** – Be prepared to dig deep to find the actual game. ***The Bottom Line*** – Perhaps too good a simulation to be much fun to play. ★★

TOWER OF BABEL
MicroStatus £24.99

Uppers – Highly cerebral, but not lacking in action (well, not totally lacking). The VCR-style control panel is an intriguing, and actually adds to the game. ***Downers*** – A bit slow-paced most of the time. ***The Bottom Line*** – Engrossing, enthralling; a damn fine game. ★★★

TREASURE TRAP
Electronic Zoo £24.99

Uppers – Graphics convey well the feel of being in a rusting hulk underwater. Adds an arcade adventure element to the *Knight Lore* genre. ***Downers*** – Very sluggish play with an unhelpful diagonal joystick system. Horribly confusing perspective, even for the game type. ***The Bottom Line*** – Fun, but only because *Head Over Heels* hasn't made it to the Amiga. ★★★

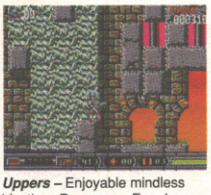
TURN IT
Kingsoft £19.99

Uppers – Interesting *Shanghai* variant. ***Downers*** – Not for the visually-impaired. ***The Bottom Line*** – Intriguing and pretty. Well worth checking out. ★★★

TURRICAN
Rainbow Arts £24.99

Uppers – Exceptional playability, and some great weapons. ***Downers*** – Sprawling layout of levels means the game can become unfocussed. If your joystick hasn't got autofire, forget it. ***The Bottom Line*** – Just too big, and having the 'continue' send you right back to the start of a (huge) level doesn't help any. ★★★

TURRICAN 2
Rainbow Arts £24.99



Uppers – Enjoyable mindless blasting. ***Downers*** – Erm, has there been some mistake here? Someone appears to have sent us a copy of *Turrican*. ***The Bottom Line*** – Better than the original, but that's the only way in which it's different. ★★★

TUSKER
System 3 (Activision) £24.99

Uppers – Nothing actually wrong with it. ***Downers*** – Nothing new. Nothing interesting. Just nothing. ***The Bottom Line*** – Depressingly average. ★★

ULTIMA V
Origin (Mindscape) £29.99

Uppers – The scope and depth of *Ultima V* goes way beyond other role-playing adventures, even previous Ultima releases. ***Downers*** – Not a bit of joystick action in sight; some may find the size of the game daunting. ***The Bottom Line*** – *Ultima V* offers arguably the best in graphic fantasy (at least until *Ultima VI* comes along). ★★★★★

ULTIMATE GOLF
Gremlin £24.95

Uppers – Very accurate. ***Downers*** – The curious graphic style is distracting, and the sound is dire. ***The Bottom Line*** – Interesting and realistic golf sim, but unlikely to fare well against the competition. ★★★

ULTIMATE RIDE
Mindscape £24.99

Uppers – Realistic handling. ***Downers*** – Dreadful gameplay. ***The Bottom Line*** – Another failed attempt at the accuracy/fun game balance. ★★

UNREAL
Ubi Soft £24.99

Uppers – Looks very striking, nice variation in gameplay too. ***Downers*** – The absurd 'save game' feature spoils things a bit. ***The Bottom Line*** – A cut above your average hack-'em-up. ★★★

VAXINE
US Gold £24.99

Uppers – Beautiful-looking, original and imaginative shoot-'em-up. ***Downers*** – Very, very, very (very) hard. ***The Bottom Line*** – Be prepared to tear your hair out. ★★★★

VECTOR CHAMPIONSHIP RUN
Impulze £24.99

Uppers – Pretty speedy. ***Downers*** – Uncontrollable. ***The Bottom Line*** – What's the point in a game you can't play? (c.f. Rhetorical Questions For Journalists, Vol. 1) ★

VENUS THE FLYTRAP
Gremlin £24.99

Uppers – Pretty colour-graduated backgrounds and excellent animation. The *P-47*-esque bonus round gives variation, and the attention to detail makes it feel like an arcade game. ***Downers*** – Lacking in challenge for the first few levels, and after that you'll be getting a bit bored with it. ***The Bottom Line*** – Good fun, but palls fairly quickly. Ideal for younger players ★★

VIZ
Virgin £24.99

Uppers: Very true to the comic. ***Downers:*** Very, very shallow and limited. The jokes only really work the first time you see them. ***The Bottom Line***: Fun while it lasts, but after the first couple of hours you've seen everything it's got to offer. ★★

VOODOO NIGHTMARE
Palace £24.99

Uppers – Clear, sharp graphics. ***Downers*** – Maddeningly sensitive controls. ***The Bottom Line*** – A nice change – an average game. ★★

WARLOCK THE AVENGER
Millenium £24.99

Uppers – Playable and quite engrossing. ***Downers*** – An 8-bit game in 16-bit's clothing. ***The Bottom Line*** – *Druid* slightly updated for the 90s, and not by any stretch of the imagination worth £25. ★★

WELLTRIS
Infogrames £24.99

Uppers – The kind of game people spend decades playing. ***Downers*** – If you didn't like *Tetris*, don't even think about it. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not as simple as its predecessor, but nearly as addictive. ★★★

WILDLIFE
MD Production £19.99

Uppers – Ideologically sound. ***Downers*** – Operation Wolf without shooting is like swimming without water. ***The Bottom Line*** – Utterly desperate. ★

WINGS
Cinemaware £29.99

Uppers – Authentic WW1 feel. ***Downers*** – Ludicrous disk swapping. Very little gameplay. ***The Bottom Line*** – Far too simple for a sim, and too expensive for what it is. ★★

WINGS OF DEATH
Thalion £24.99

Uppers – Range of power-ups is good, even including power-downs! ***Downers*** – Not the most innovative game ever. ***The Bottom Line*** – Almost as much fun as *Xenon 2*, though not as pretty. ★★★

WINGS OF FURY
Broderbund (Domark) £24.99

Uppers – Elements of flight simulation bring a little depth to the action, and the graphics have a lot of character. ***Downers*** – Is that all there is? ***The Bottom Line*** – Strongly reminiscent of budget STOS game *Skystrike*, with 8-bit graphics and not much to recommend it. ★★

WIPE OUT
Gonzo Games £19.99

Uppers – Highly tactical game with loads of excitement too. ***Downers*** – A light cycles game in 1990 is hardly the peak of innovation (in fact it wasn't even the peak of innovation in 1980). ***The Bottom Line*** – Poor graphics, sound (etc) but still a fun game. ★★★

WOLFPACK
Mirrorsoft £24.99

Uppers – Very deep (ho ho). ***Downers*** – Sub sims never score highly on the thrillometer, and this one is no exception. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not as overly techie-biased as many in the genre, but still not one to recommend to the hardened action junkies. ★★

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP SOCCER
Elite £24.99

Uppers – Very good copy of the coin-op (sob). ***Downers*** – Poor playability, you never get two seconds on the ball. ***The Bottom Line*** – Knocked out in the first round. ★★

WRATH OF THE DEMON
Readysoft £29.99

Uppers – Cheaper than *Shadow Of The Beast II*. ***Downers*** – Almost exactly the same in every other respect. ***The Bottom Line*** – If you liked *S.O.T.B.II* you'll already have bought it, so you won't need this. Otherwise a good alternative. ★★

XENOMORPH
Pandora £24.99

Uppers – Lots of lasting appeal, lots of depth. ***Downers*** – Very big, perhaps too big. ***The Bottom Line*** – Let down by weak sound, but still pretty good stuff. ★★

XIPHOS
Electronic Zoo £24.99

Uppers – Silky smooth and subtle. ***Downers*** – Takes far too long to get into the action. ***The Bottom Line*** – Only for the dedicated space trader. ★★

YOLANDA
Millenium £24.99

Uppers – Racy soundtrack. ***Downers*** – Poor graphics make the pixel-perfect positioning required very hard to pull off. ***The Bottom Line*** – Just too hard to be any amount of fun to play. ★

ZARATHRUSTA
Hewson £24.99

Uppers – The *Thrust* gameplay is timeless, and it's been updated with 1990s graphics, resulting in something very special indeed. ***Downers*** – At heart though, it's still a game that used to sell for £1.99, going for £25, which isn't a bargain in anyone's language. ***The Bottom Line*** – Good fun, but not good value. ★★★

ZIRIAX
The Software Business £24.99

Uppers – Pretty *Scramble* variant. ***Downers*** – Seriously overloaded in the difficulty department. ***The Bottom Line*** – Stupidly difficult, too much for almost everyone. ★★

Z-OUT
Rainbow Arts £24.99

Uppers – A huge improvement on *X-Out*. ***Downers*** – The horizontally scrolling shoot-'em-up with knobs on thing has already been done to death. ***The Bottom Line*** – A better *R-Type* than *R-Type*, but it isn't different enough to make it stand out from the crowd. ★★★

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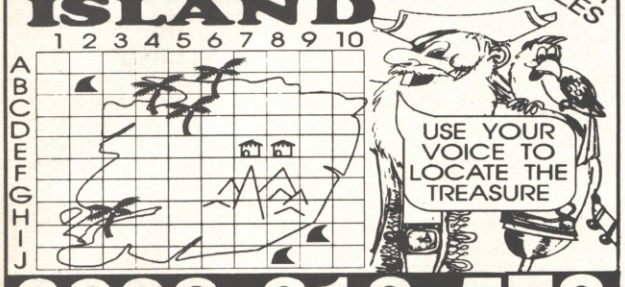

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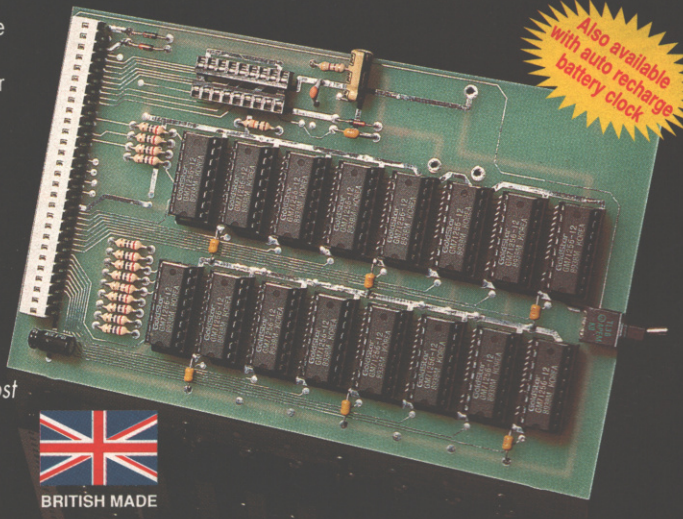

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DO THE write THING

Welcome to the first AMIGA POWER letters page. Thanks to everyone who wrote in – when you're struggling on a new magazine, it's nice to know there's someone out there...

● **Address your letters to AMIGA POWER, Beaufort Court, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon, BA1 2BW**

Dear Amiga Power,

Just thought I'd drop you a quick line (first one you've got?) to congratulate you on what is without a doubt the single greatest debut magazine ever! I had my reservations but now I've got it in my hands it's better than I could have imagined!

The way you treat older games – ie not assuming everyone has already got them all – suits me fine as I've only had my Amiga for a few months. It's a mag that you actually read from page to page, not flick through loads of articles until you find a good one – they're all the biz. Hurry up issue 2!

MARC JONES
MORDEN, SURREY

Thank you Marc. We liked this letter. In fact, we liked it so much I think we'll print another just like it.

Dear Amiga Power,

I loved your first issue, as it's the most promising new computer magazine since The One started. I have always been a fan of Gary Penn (ever since Zzap!), and was pleased to find that he had resurfaced in a new and rewarding periodical.

It seems that the magazine has been going for years rather than one month, as it's perfect. The One was good, but it has only ever reached your excellence on a few occasions. The features are all worthwhile and combine to create the new 16-bit bible. I wish you all the best for the future as I want to see you do well and do justice to the Amiga. To sum up: issue one – a collector's item.

LAWRENCE P. SINDERSON
DARTFORD, KENT.

People even wrote to us in the style of the inimitable Bottom Line...

Dear Matt,

I've included my subscription form, I'm hooked. **Uppers:** Colour, concise, just what we need. **Downers:** Not enough pages (I'm just greedy). **The Bottom Line:** The best. 100%

MR R. TOMPKINS
RAYNES PARK, LONDON

Now hold on a minute! Nothing got over 89% in our first issue, so I think 100% for us – nice though it is to hear – is overdoing it a little, don't you think?

We could quite literally fill this page – and a few more like it – with praising letters, but it'd soon get boring so we won't. Instead, there's this...

Dear Matt,

We were both surprised and disappointed to see the review of *The Killing Cloud* in your launch issue.

Surprised because the review and its mark were certainly inconsistent with the opinions of the rest of the computer press, including AMIGA POWER's own sister magazines Amiga Format (80%) and ST Format (93% Format Gold).

Disappointed because the review itself was extremely negative and imbalanced. Reviewer Tim Smith seems to fancy himself as a bit of an authority on games design and took gleeful delight in drawing attention to a handful of inconsistencies which he banged on about at great length. He was grudgingly forced to admit 'The action is fast and furious...the whole venture smacks of quality and thought' – comments which I think are a little inconsistent with a mark of just 65%.But then life can't be inconsistent, can it Tim? The problem with any artistic venture, and that is what a computer program is, is that it is not supposed to completely recreate real life. Computer programs are governed by their own rules and sometimes realism is bent completely in two so that playability triumphs.

For instance, has it occured to Tim that the reason you have a limited supply of nets might be to make the game itself more exciting? While I respect the right of any reviewer to have their own independent opinion, they should be responsible enough to come to a balanced and fair conclusion.

One point that never came across in Tim's review is did he enjoy playing the program? Has he felt like playing it since the review? Playing computer programs is all about enjoyment and at the end of the day that should be the major criteria on how a computer program should be judged.

A review such as the *Killing Cloud* review did the product a disservice, but more importantly it did your readers a disservice – it was unfairly biased and churlish and griping. Obviously it is the reviewer's duty to draw readers attention to both good and bad features in a program, but it is not fair or right that they should slant a review in such a negative fashion.

CATHY CAMPOS
PR MANAGER, IMAGE WORKS

Hmm.Tim wasn't around to answer your letter himself as this page went to press, Cathy – a bit of a shame, I agree – but I have to say that I don't have any problems with his review. The Killing Cloud *was a very technically impressive game, but there are a lot of technically impressive games around these days – as you say, it's how much fun a game is to play that's the over-riding factor, and I thought Tim covered that quite well. The overall impression I got from the review was of a game he very much wanted to like, but couldn't because it was so frustrating. From my experience, playing it's like being the teacher of a talented but unco-operative little kid – you want to smack it round the head to beat some sense into it.*
Here's someone addressing a much more serious issue...

Dear Amiga Power,

This is the first time I have felt the need to put pen to paper and convey my feelings to you. I have been a regular subscriber to Amiga Format since I bought my Amiga back in June last year, and to my delight Future Publishing saw the need for more specialist magazines, concentrating on both serious and gaming applications of this versatile machine. Sure enough, I picked up my copy of AMIGA POWER and first impressions were that Future Publishing had got it right again – fine, no-holds-barred reviews and great insights into the 'behind the scenes' activities.

But then I looked more closely at the introduction to the cover disk and was astonished to read 'Every month AMIGA POWER carries a demo-packed disk stuck to the cover.' Hold on, I thought, this can't be right – the lads and lasses at Future Publishing had promised complete games with every issue in their advertisements. I read on. 'Normally, that is – to kick off with it's a little bit special...That's right, to get the ball rolling we're actually giving away complete games on the first two issues...' Big deal! I referred back to Amiga Format 21. A two page advertisement clearly states, under the heading 'Know your rights' , 'You have the right to fine software. Every issue will carry the highest quality complete game on a cover mounted disk.'

So I ask myself, what am I to expect from this cover disk – a load of demos as the editorial in AMIGA POWER states, or am I to believe the advertising and news editorial in Amiga Format and expect to receive a complete game as clearly stated?

Only one solution – write to the people who know. Do I get a complete game or was I being conned?

MR R. G. GRINNELL
SOLIHULL, WEST MIDLANDS

No, Mr. Grinnell, you won't get a complete game each month, but equally no, you weren't being conned. What happened – as was briefly explained in the masthead of the All-Time Top 100 Games supplement, though many people will have missed it – was that the claim made in Amiga Format and elsewhere that AMIGA POWER would carry complete games regularly caused some quite considerable ripples in the UK computer industry. Many software publishers saw this as the start of a slide into a covermounted disk war similar to the tape war that has existed between the Spectrum mags for some time, with more and more bits of complete software being effectively 'given away' with more and more 16-bit magazines.
Eventually you would reach a stage where people would have so many 'free' games – and ones of such high quality too, if games of the standard of Bombuzal *or* Kid Gloves *became the norm – that they'd see little need to buy many new ones, and the software industry would suffer. Or something like that anyway. You can see the reasoning too – while a* Lemmings *or a* Gods *would probably not be too badly affected, a lot of your more, erm, 'average' products would start to look very bad value indeed.*

Thus a meeting of the industry body ELSPA voted for a ban starting next month, with no more free games being given away after the July issues – something that'll apply to every 16-bit magazine.

And that's the story, really. Don't despair, though. We think you'll be pleasantly surprised by what we'll be featuring on our disk after issue 2.

Finally, the anti-cute strikes back! We got this faxed through to us from the Image Works offices a few days after the first issue of AMIGA POWER hit the streets. It's addressed to Stuart Campbell, who reviewed the game Brat *in that very magazine...*

Dear Stuart,

My name is Nathan and I'm the star of Image Works' latest release *Brat*! What I would like to know is since when have you been the unofficial spokesman for the entire software publishing industry? You say that everyone hates me, but I can point you in the direction of several magazines who think that I'm the coolest dude ever seen on a computer screen. Just check out the reviews *Brat* got in The One, Zero and your sister magazine Amiga Format – they don't think I'm nauseating at all.

I think your problem is that you were a bit of a wimp when you were a kid, so of course you find it hard to identify with a streetwise cool dude like me.

No way am I a 'second rate Bart Simpson clone', I'm the original anti-cute and Image Works have marketed me as such. Anyone else comes a poor second in the originality stakes.

Even you have had to concede that *Brat* is a well implemented, beautifully programmed original product and it seems that you have allowed your personal prejudices against cool kids to influence your judgement. If you want to play namby pamby cutie games all your life get on with it. Some of us are sick to death of cute and cuddly games and want characters with real character like me!

I suppose you think that because you're bigger than me you can say what you like but I'm gunning for you, man, and one day I'm going to give you what you deserve...
I imagine that your street cred is absolutely zero and I feel that you would achieve greater job satisfaction working on Train Spotters Monthly – then you could truly claim to speak for your readers.

NATHAN
THE BRAT

Oh dear. Someone thinks he's a cartoon character. Stuart had a very rude reply to this letter, but I wouldn't let him print it. Instead I'll say that while, in fairness, I thought Stuart was a bit harsh with Brat *– I wrote an On the other hand... box next to his review explaining as much – he wasn't being ridiculously unfair. As far as the general consensus of opinion in this office goes, this was only an 'average-to-quite-good' game, not a great one.*

And there we have it – our first letters page. Just time to say, if you've got something to say, write to us at the address above! ■

Next issue: The July issue of Amiga Power will be on sale on the 27th of June. See you there!

GO WiLd!
TOKI
No ugly wart-nose is gonna make a monkey out of me! But that's just what that witch has done - one minute I'm the mighty Toki and the next I'm having breakfast delousing my armpits, I can't walk a step without tripping over my knuckles and, oh, there's an overhanging vine - time to swing out sister! But my broken heart is going ape. My beloved Miho (I can't wait to share a banana with her) has been kidnapped and somehow I've got to regain my manhood - until then I'm just swingin' in the rain!
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Screen shots from various formats

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NEXT MONTH!

Amiga Power No 3 will be launched upon unsuspecting newsstands nationwide on or around June 27th. It'll be packed with games reviews, features (including a full, if you will, 'exposé' on Commodore's Amiga-based CD-TV), more tips than you've ever seen, plus all our usual ground-breaking stuff. Oh yes, and it'll have one of our stunning demo-packed disks stuck to the front cover too, as well as a SPECIAL FREE GIFT! It's one not to be missed – order your copy now!

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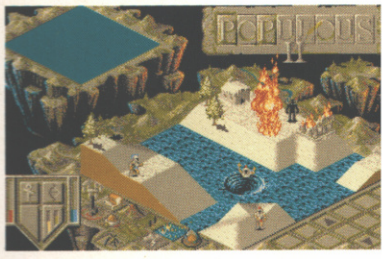

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